Vol. 8 • Issue 7 March 1, 1993 $3.00

CELTICS PRIDE

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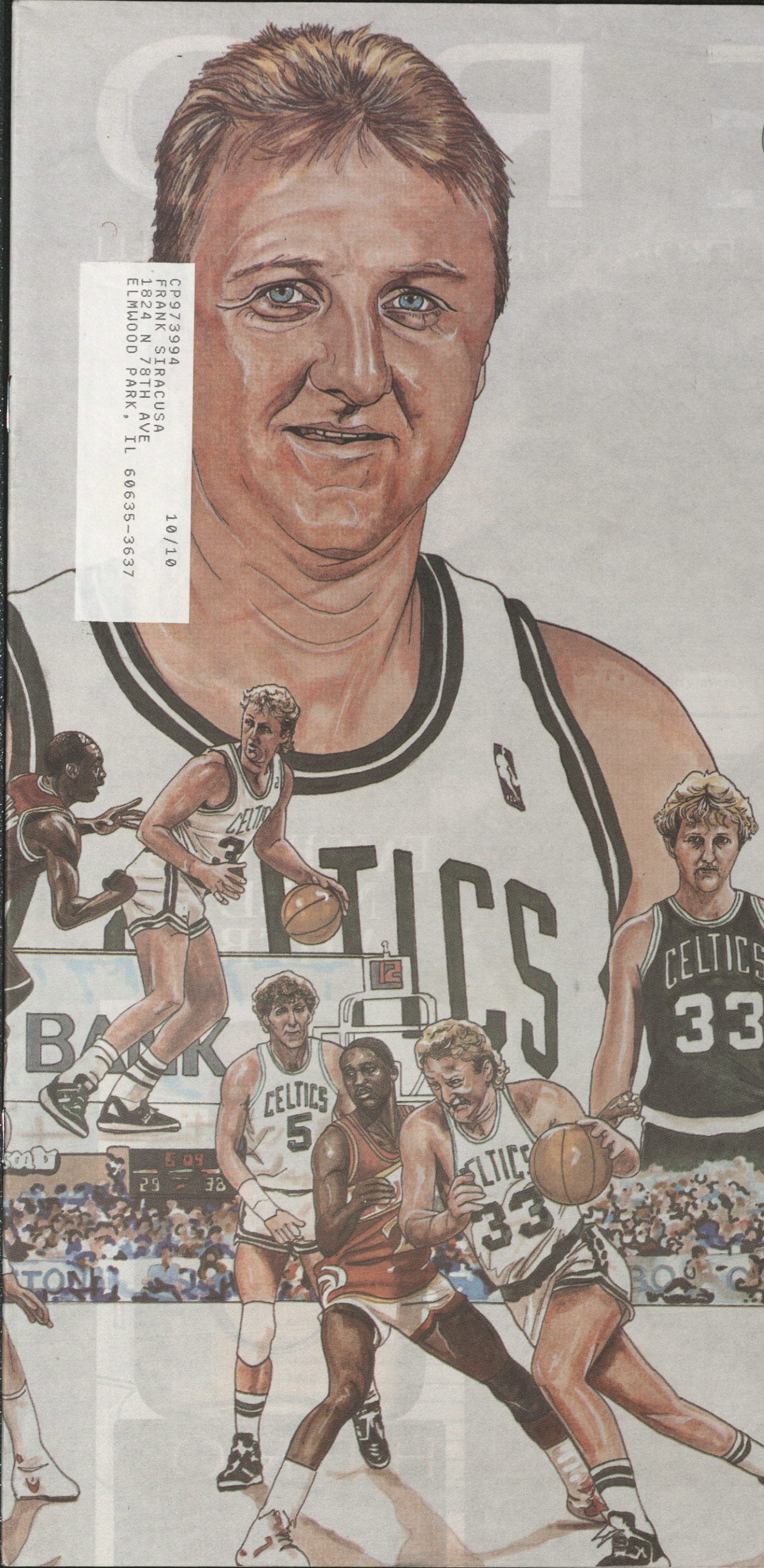

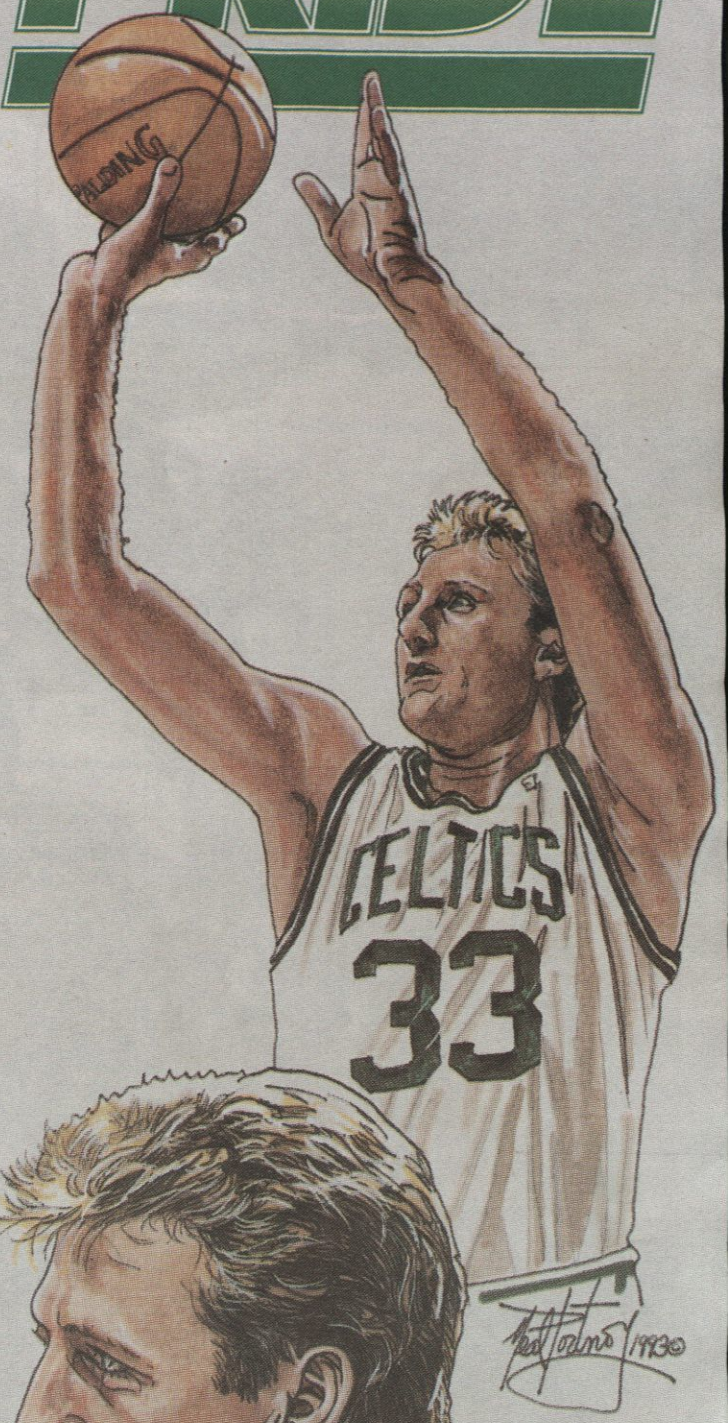

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CELTICS PRIDE

VIEW POINT

An End of an Era

By Porter McKinnon

Larry Bird Night was the official end to the era that was one of the most special in all of sports. I felt so good watching it, but now I have this gnawing, empty feeling with me all the time.

There are so many things I remember about Larry, that it is hard to focus on just one or two.

Looking back, I still can't believe that he was able to take Indiana State all the way to the NCAA Finals in 1979 all by himself. Magic Johnson had help, a lot of it, but Larry was definitely on his own.

While his overall work ethic is the most vivid memory that I carry of Larry, there are a huge number of highlights I just can't and won't forget. Some of them are:

● Feb. 11, 1981 — He scored 36 points, took down 21 rebounds, 6 assists and 5 steals and blocked 3 shots against the Lakers in Los Angeles.

● May 3, 1981 — He hit a 15 foot bank shot to beat the 76ers, 91-90, thereby winning the Eastern Conference Finals. The Celtics took the last three games in a row to knock out Philly.

● Jan. 31, 1982 — He hit 7 of 12 from the floor, 5 foul shots, 12 rebounds and 5 assists to be named MVP of the NBA All-Star game.

● June 12, 1984 — Led the Celtics to another NBA Championship, this time over the Lakers in seven games. In the series he averaged 27.5 points, 11 rebounds, 5.9 assists and 2.3 steals and was named MVP of the playoffs as well as later being named league MVP.

● March 12, 1985 — Scored a team record 60 points against the Hawks in New Orleans, hitting 22 of 36 from the floor.

● Feb. 8, 1986 — Won the NBA's first three-point shooting contest at the All-Star weekend with an incredible performance.

● June 8, 1986 — He completely dominated Houston to win the NBA Championship again. Larry averaged 25.9 points, 9.3 rebounds, 8.2 assists and was again named MVP.

● April 19, 1987 — Ended the season as the first player in NBA history to shoot 50 percent from the field and 90 percent from the line.

● May 26, 1987 — In the last few seconds of the fifth game of the Eastern Conference Finals against the hated Pistons, he stole the inbounds pass by Isiah Thomas, then instantly hit Dennis Johnson for a layup to win the game. What a moment!

● Nov. 11, 1987 — He had the first 40/20 game in Celtics history. Against the Indiana Pacers, he scored 42 points and grabbed 22 rebounds.

● Feb. 6, 1988 — Beat out Dale Ellis to win his third straight three-point contest at the All-Star weekend.

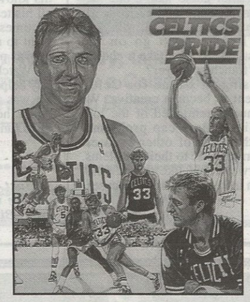
● May 22, 1988 — He personally knocked the Hawks out of the playoffs, 118-116, by scoring 20 points in the fourth quarter in a head to head duel with Dominique Wilkins.

● March 15, 1992 — He carried the Celtics to an incredible double overtime win over Portland, scoring 49 points, including an all-time highlight film, leaning three-point shot at the buzzer to send the game into overtime.

Obviously, there are many more highlights. Each of you can come up with your own. I do know I have never seen anyone like him. ●

LINEUP

FEATURES



THE NATION'S TOP PROSPECTS

With the Celtics continuing what will probably be a season-long flirtation with the lottery, interest among the team's followers in the 1993 college draft is understandably running higher than normal for this time of the year. In the first of two installments, Celtics Pride considers the top collegiate prospects, players you fans might want to begin checking out for yourselves.

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MID-SEASON GRADES ARE IN

At the mid-season marking period, it appears the Celtics are still a team with a lot of question marks. There have been signs indicating progress in recent months, but the Bird-less C's have for the most part been a woefully inconsistent bunch.

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COVER

Larry Bird Night was an extravaganza, a gala few athletes will ever know. It was a fitting salute to a man whose talents were extraordinary, his desire without equal. If you weren't lucky enough to attend or were unable to watch the ceremonies on television, here's how that historic night at the Boston Garden unfolded, from start to finish.

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Cover illustration by Neal Portnoy.

Volume 8, Issue 7, Number 147, March 1, 1993

CELTICS PRIDE

A WESTON COMMUNICATIONS PUBLICATION

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203-329-2000

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Celtics Pride (ISSN 0897-8379) is published twice per month during the basketball season (October–May) and monthly in the off-season (June–September), for a total of 20 issues each year, by Weston Communications, Inc., 85 Old Long Ridge Road, Stamford CT 06903. Second Class postage is paid at Stamford CT and additional entry offices. Subscription rate is $36.00 for 20 issues (1 year). Canadian subscriptions are US$66.00 for 20 issues.

Postmaster, please send address changes to:
Celtics Pride, 85 Old Long Ridge Road, Stamford CT 06903.

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SOUND OFF

By Porter McKinnon

No Dunking for Dee

Dear Sound Off,

Why did Dee Brown turn down an invitation to the 1993 All-Star weekend Slam Dunk contest? He can dunk better than anyone in the NBA! If Dee would have participated, he could have easily added another Slam Dunk trophy to his collection. A lot of Celtic fans that I know wanted to see Dee Brown take back his Slam Dunk title. Come on Dee, don't disappoint your fans!

Phil Needler
Albany, IN

Apparently, Dee Brown doesn't wish to develop a reputation that is based on his ability to win the Slam Dunk contest. He is concerned with his playing skills and not his exhibition skills.

Sounds refreshing to me.

A Chance of a Lifetime

Dear Sound Off,

I have been reading everybody's recommendations for bringing the Celtics back into the upper echelon of teams, so I thought I would play General Manager, too.

The Abdelnaby trade is looking better every day. From what I have seen from him, he seems to have excellent ball handling skills, a good shooting touch for a big man and is not afraid to throw his body around inside. With a little playing time, and discipline, he could become a real steal for the Celtics, if they can overcome his alleged attitude problems. Danny Manning wants out of L.A. and will probably be traded by the Feb. 25 deadline. The Celtics should offer Xavier McDaniel and, say, Dee Brown to the Clippers for Manning. Manning is a young, incredible talent for his size, 6'11, and the Clippers are fools to let him go, but his relationship with Larry Brown has worn very thin, and after the team finally made the playoffs last year and then Elgin Baylor and Larry Brown dismantled the team, it does not seem that they are very shrewd businessmen. The Clippers are going to be getting some great offers for Manning so the Celtics better make their offer pretty sweet. McDaniel can help the Clippers on the boards and Dee can help them in the backcourt and enable them to trade Ron Harper before they have to renew his contract for $4 million next year. If the Celtics cannot obtain Manning, how about a Joe Kleine or Kevin Gamble for Ken Norman move? Kleine has never impressed me since Sacramento wasted a very high first round pick on him and then gladly dumped him on the Celtics.

If the Celtics cannot get Manning, I also like an earlier writer's mention of Stacey King in Chicago. He is a big young player who can run the floor well. How about Sherman Douglas for King? Sherman would fit a lot better in their running game and would enable them to trade B.J. Armstrong. I am not sure if the Bulls would make a move with the Celtics, or if this deal could be made with Douglas' salary, but maybe he would agree to cut some of it to move to a better environment for him.

I also agree with you 100%; the Celtics, I hope, are doing whatever they can to obtain Jim Jackson. This guy is a big time talent and a lot of scouts thought he was the best all around player coming out of college. How about Dee Brown, Kevin Gamble or Rick Fox and the Celtics' first round next year for Jackson?

I think Dee, Kevin and Rick are good players, but they cannot offer the consistent scoring that a Danny Manning or a Jim Jackson can offer, and the Celtics might not get a chance like this again soon.

Rick Sander
Santa Ana, CA

I am sure that you have noticed that recently Abdelnaby has been struggling. Chris Ford is looking for rebounding and defense from him and has not been satisfied with his production. He certainly wants more minutes, but I seriously doubt if he has an attitude problem.

Manning would look good in a Celtics uniform, but the Celtics would need to do a lot of contract shuffling to get it done. I'm not sure if the Clippers would take your deal, but I am sure that the Celtics could put together a logical deal that the Clippers might take. However, the word "logic" has never found its way into the Clippers' vocabulary.

I agree with your last statement. Opportunities to get a Manning or a Jackson don't come along often. When they do you have to act. Don't you?

Difficult Decisions Must Be Made

Dear Sound Off,

Perhaps the time has come when some difficult decisions must be made.

First of all, even the most ardent fans will agree that the Celtics are *not* a championship caliber team.

In fact, the "best" they can hope for is the eighth and final slot, which will in all likelihood pit them against Chicago in what will be an early exit.

With that in mind, why continue to play veteran players in their last year of service with the team when, in reality, all that will be gained is a quick first round exit?

The young players must play major minutes every game so that at the end of the year management can finally evaluate their performance and, most importantly, their future. If they are not players then they should be released.

However, to fully evaluate their talents they must play, but with Chris Ford's tenuous situation this is unlikely to happen. It is much too easy to play veteran players and secure a few more victories. But what is really being gained from the extra victories?

Celtic management is kidding themselves by playing Parish, McHale and Bagley in hopes of making the playoffs.

We would all love to see the Celtics make the playoffs with a young team; however, to make the playoffs with three players who will, in all probability, not return next year is foolish.

Unfortunately, the Celtics' long-term future would be better served by not making the playoffs.

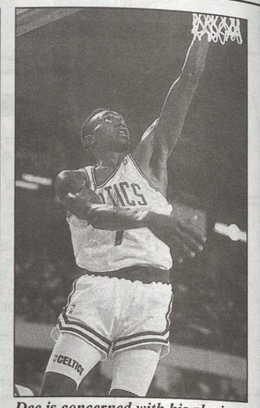
With the prospect of a lottery pick and the availability of additional money, the Celtics could begin the rebuilding process the right way.

I'm not suggesting that the Celtics should not try to win games; I am saying that if a playoff berth is earned, it should be with young players.

Also, it troubles me to see Reggie Lewis having to play significant minutes game after game with a bad leg. Hasn't management learned from the tragedy of Kevin McHale playing hurt? If Reggie must go on the injured list, do so; why take a chance with your franchise player?

In closing, it's time for Celtic management to become creative. We are continually reminded of the loss of Len Bias, salary cap problems, along with a host of other excuses. We are sympathetic to their problems, however, we would like to see positive action instead of hearing excuses.

Anthony Viola
Long Beach, CA



Dee is concerned with his playing skills and not his exhibition skills.

We just ended an era and it's time to start another. You do that with lottery picks and creative trades. I'm ready for either one or both.

Bird Was an Inspiration

Dear Sound Off,

I just could not let Larry's retirement go by without telling you how much his career meant to me and my family.

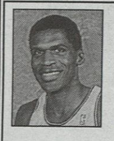
After John Havlicek retired I just didn't pay any attention to the Celtics. In fact, before Bird came, I thought pro basketball was an exhibition program like the Harlem Globetrotters and the Washington Generals. I believed that line — "you only have to watch the last two minutes of an NBA game to know what happened."

Then my boss gave me tickets to a Celtics game in early 1980. I just couldn't believe how hard Larry worked at the game. I couldn't believe his passing, I couldn't believe his knowledge of defense and where all his teammates were on the floor at all times. From that time on, I didn't want to miss a minute of a game that he was playing in.

Watching him work so hard actually helped me work harder at my job. He was a lot more than a great entertainer, he was an inspiration to many of us fans.

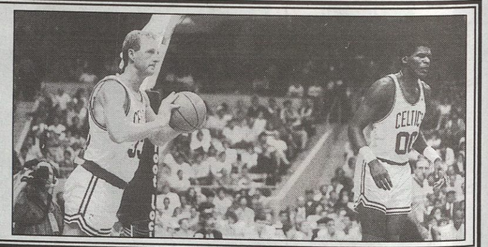
Carl Coleman
Boston, MA

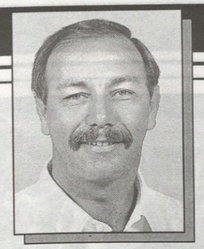
Just like Magic Johnson said: "There will never, ever be another Larry Bird!!" ●



Robert Parish on Larry Bird:

"I put Larry with Magic (Johnson), Michael Jordan and also Muhammad Ali as people who were legends while they were still active. There aren't many people you can say that about. Larry wanted to win at all costs. He did whatever he had to do to win."





By Chris Ford as told to Bob Schron

COACH'S CORNER

ALWAYS IN SEARCH OF THE RIGHT COMBINATION

EDITOR'S NOTE: *If you have any questions you would like to ask Chris Ford, send them to* Celtics Pride, *85 Old Long Ridge Road, Stamford, CT 06903 and we will pass them along. Look for the answers to your questions in future issues of* Celtics Pride.

Celtics Pride: **What do you think of Lorenzo Williams' contributions so far and what role do you see him playing for the Celtics in the second half of the season?**

Chris Ford: Lorenzo came to us with a fine series of reports, saying he had a willingness to go in and rebound, and he's certainly come through for us early. As I've said, our biggest needs are defense and rebounding, particularly from the four spot. Lorenzo is a young player and needs work on posting up and holding his position underneath. The NBA is a physically demanding league, night in and night out, and we'll see in the second half how durable he is.

CP: **What's going on with Alaa Abdelnaby? Why isn't he getting playing time any longer?**

CF: Alaa had some good games on our first western trip and then seemed to maintain it once we returned in early January. But this could be a repetition of my first answer, only you would substitute Alaa's name for Lorenzo's. I'm not necessarily looking for offense from the four spot on our team. Our best moments come when we're able to get up on people defensively and burn teams with our running game. We need defense and rebounding primarily from our big people (although Kevin McHale's great low post game is an exception). Alaa has gone back in the past few weeks and as a result his playing time has been reduced. We'll have to see. He is working hard in practice.

CP: **Kevin Gamble and Lorenzo Williams put in productive performances in a recent home loss to the Lakers, but both came out of the game early after hot starts. Why?**

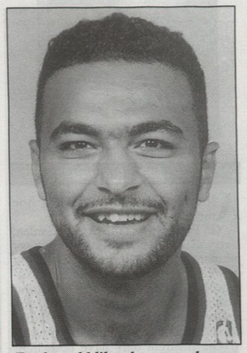
CF: Experience and strength really are the answers to that question, as well as matchups. Yes, Lorenzo did do the job off of the boards. He was the reason we started strong — his eleven rebounds speak for themselves. But as the Lakers came on in the second quarter, I just felt Kevin McHale's inside game would force the Lakers to adjust to us, so I utilized him instead of Lorenzo. Xavier McDaniel has been arguably our best player of anyone this season; when the Lakers went to a frontline of Sam Perkins, A.C. Green and Vlade Divac (and then substituted Worthy for Perkins), I felt X's defense and strength was a better decision for us at that time.

CP: **What role/attention makes you most comfortable? Does it depend on who's hot at the time or is it mostly based on how you match up with the opposition?**

CF: I would prefer to have a set rotation, but as we've discussed, one of the problems at the power forward spot — inconsistency — has affected us this season as a team. I'm really not sure what to expect, night to night. If matchups dictate a certain move, for example, using X as a power forward for (hopefully) brief stretches of time, then I'll go that way. Matchups dictate my thinking, instinct does…I think if you look at our game against the Golden State Warriors at home earlier this month, you'd have a perfect example. They literally slowed the game down to a standstill, using isolations and running twenty seconds off of the clock in each possession. I matched up with them throughout and it meant two distinct decisions. One, I went most of the way with Dee Brown to counter their fine point guard, Tim Hardaway. And in the fourth quarter, I went with the combination of Dee, Kevin McHale, Rick Fox, Kevin Gamble and Reggie Lewis. It *appears* awkward without a center and without a power forward. But it worked — we outdefensed them and we came away with the win. And in the final minute of that game, I used Robert Parish and he blocked a critical shot that would have tied the game. As a coach, you're constantly reading situations. Strategy dictates your decisions, knowing how a certain player or players are practicing influences your thinking. It's difficult to describe, but in an 82 game season, if a player is working hard all year, there will be moments when he'll have an opportunity to perform. It's why practice is so critical.

CP: **With the trading deadline approaching, do you see any moves being made by the Celtics?**

CF: I'm not aware of any as this is written. I will say that we're always listening, but as far as I know, nothing right now is immediately pending. ●



Ford would like players such as Alaa to provide a strong defensive game from the four spot.

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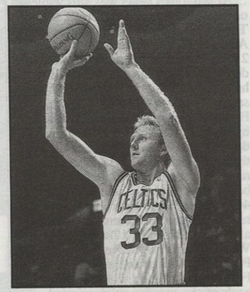

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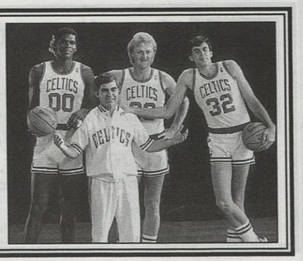
Jo Jo White on Larry Bird:

"Had I known the Celtics were going to sign Larry Bird, I would not have left. I kind of kicked myself for not being more patient in that regard because I missed playing with such an outstanding player. But after getting a chance to watch him with anticipation — and being able to see him continue to blossom and develop as great as anticipated — that was very, very special. Being a former Celtic and living in New York, I always felt confident cheering for my team because of Larry. He added some great magnitude to the Celtics franchise. So from a retired Celtic's standpoint, he brought a lot of smiles to my life."



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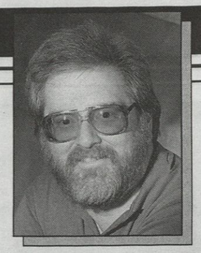


It Was Bird at His Best

By Jim Bianchine

A lot of souls were sold for one more night.

On February 4 at the Boston Garden, Larry Bird was letting his feathery jumper fly once more. He was diving out of bounds for loose balls and flicking blind passes over his head and whipping them behind his back one last time and chants of "Larry, Larry, Larry" echoed throughout the rafters.

Oh, it might only have been high fidelity, but it was Bird at his best, the fresh-faced kid with the farm-boy look from French Lick in the bloom of his youth.

It was Bird at his best in the gunfight with Dominique Wilkins. It was Bird picking off a pass against the Pistons that needs no further explanation.

It was an older version, the gritty Bird, who was decked in the playoffs, returning to the fray after a jolting fall and brain-rattling bang on the head against the Pacers in the deciding game; though it was on the big screen while the man himself sat on the parquet.

It was a nostalgic stroll down memory lane, a sentimental journey that no one in the creaky old lady of basketball will ever forget.

If the devil himself comes knocking on their door looking to collect, it may have been well worth the price of his regal return to the place he made his parquet playground.

Yet the hick turned hero story is one that will be told for generations and the likes of another Larry Legend may never be seen. A player like Bird descends on the scene once in a lifetime.

We have been lucky. He and Magic Johnson gave us what has to be considered the golden age of basketball.

His love for the game was as pure as his fans' love for him. His passion burned while his vision, toughness and touch helped separate him from the rest.

His spirit couldn't be broken, nor could his will. But, sadly, he had to leave the game he loved dearly with a broken body, his back no longer able to withstand the rigors of the grueling game.

Bird lives by a higher source than most and he knew only one way to play, a classic all-or-nothing guy.

It speaks volumes about his pride. He was proud enough to know when to let go of the game he held so dear.

But it wasn't the bugler sounding surrender. It was simply an acknowledgement — Father Time had finally caught him in the open court.

Bird may not have been blessed with the physical tools of some, which makes the man even more remarkable. But he was a living, breathing tribute to desire that raged within his soul and his spirit was simply unbreakable.

Larry Bird Night was a litany of accolades for the ledgers of statistics he produced, sometimes astounding for the ultimate team player. As he himself said, he didn't put on the uniform to play. He put it on to win.

However, amidst a marvelous production dripping in sentimentality, there, too, loomed a reminder of morality, his and ours. Sure, we knew the time would come. We dreaded it. Yet we can't help but feel it just came a little too soon and, with that thought, a certain sadness at times filled the festive air.

The man gave us more than his basketball artistry and three more banners. He gave his heart and soul for 13 years and epitomized what the storied franchise stood for.

The more the long, lean kid with the flowing golden locks played over the years, the more rural Indiana faded. But on the outside only, even though stardom fell upon him the moment he let that first feathery jumper fly. He remained homespun and hard working.

Whenever one speaks of Bird in Boston, it will forever be with a certain reverence, for he helped a franchise regain a lost respect, renewed hope and upheld tradition — a 6'9 savior in short pants.

He is a folk hero. That night 14,890 people were damn glad he was *their* folk hero, even though deep inside they always knew Boston just borrowed the boy from Indiana for a few great years. The homespun Hoosier was truly an adopted patriot.

Bird wasn't just one of the game's greats. What he did, he did with a flare few have possessed, making him forever part of basketball lore. His impact on basketball is immeasurable.

For me, February 4, 1993 is a date that will live forever, a never-to-be-forgotten final salute.

Though there is such a sense of finality associated with that night, I, for one, know the sale of this soul was well worth it.

Players felt blessed by playing alongside him and even against him. It's no different for this scribe. Covering the Boston Celtics in the Larry Bird era was not a job, it was a privilege.

That's why saying goodbye is so hard.

• • •

Seattle must have been mighty ugly after losing a season-high three games, the most they have lost consecutively since coach George Carl took over. The Sonics took it out on Washington, 120-92. The Bullets just continue to spiral, as one look at the standings will indicate…The Cavs have the Hawks' number. Cleveland has beaten Atlanta 9 times in a row…The red-hot Spurs have won 14 of their last 15 at this writing and have finally vaulted into first place in the Midwest Division that figures to be a three-team fight to the finish with Utah and Houston…The Timberwolves have lost 12 in a row to the Spurs…Idle thought. Where was Jimmy Rodgers on Larry Bird Night? …The Nuggets at least win at home. They have won 8 straight at McNichols …At last look Dallas was still winless on the road this season in 19 tries… The Magic won 21 games last season. After 40 games their record stood at 21-19…The Trailblazers lost to Orlando for the first time ever. The win was huge for the Magic, marking their third straight win on the road. Winning in Portland used to be an unthinkable act by any of the four new teams. It marked the first time the Magic have ever won three straight on the road…Prior to stunning losses to Minnesota and Orlando back-to-back at home, the Blazers were 41-1 against the league's four new sisters…The Suns are almost unbeatable at home. They are 17-1 at America West Arena…The Mavericks beat the Pacers, which should qualify for their February win. They won only once in each of the previous three months… New York Knicks coach Pat Riley clinched his ninth All-Star coaching berth, but ironically has never been the NBA Coach of the Year. Hardly makes sense with all the success he's had.

Hail to the Chief yet again. On February 5, Robert Parish moved ahead of Elvin Hayes into second place on the all-time games list when he played his 1,304th. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar remains number one…Remember when the Pistons were the baddest road dudes in the league? They have dropped 8 in a row away from home…Golden State, which ironically was tied for the best record in the league on the road last season, has lost 10 in a row away from home. Speaking of the Warriors, Chris Mullin's 301 game streak of scoring in double figures ended when he scored just four against Washington. He may be headed for thumb surgery soon.

Just how hot was Miami's Glen Rice when he poured in 45 points against Atlanta? "They could have cooked on his head he was so hot," said teammate Rony Seikaly. The Heat set a franchise record by limiting the Hawks to 13 points in the final period…The Suns have defeated the Wolves all 15 times they have played…To find out exactly what the World Champion Bulls are made of, tune in after they have completed their stretch of 9 straight road games …The Rockets have been playing well of late, winners of 12 of 15…Who would have thought Phoenix rookie coach Phil Westphal, himself a four-time All-Star, would be coaching the Western Division All-Star team?. Not so much because of the Suns' success, but by the way he clinched it. The Timberwolves got him the job when they beat Portland in Oregon. Minnesota had lost 13 consecutive games to Western Division teams …Houston owns the Pacers at the Summit where they have won the last 16 meetings…Dominique Wilkins moved into some pretty heavy company when he surpassed all-time great Bob Pettit as the Hawks' all-time leading scorer. Pettit scored 20,880 career points. ●

Jim Bianchine writes for Thomson Newspapers and covers the Celtics for the Taunton daily Gazette in Taunton, Massachusetts.

The hick-turned-hero story is one that will be told for generations.

Tom Heinsohn on Larry Bird:

"I think that Larry was one of the greatest competitors the game has ever seen. He had the mind of a chess player when everybody else was playing checkers. He was always five moves ahead of anybody else and he was a leader. He led by example."

MAN TO MAN

Bill Walton Really Does Care About "Celtics Pride"

By Bob Schron

Bill Walton, arguably one of the best centers in basketball history, has assumed his new role as color commentator with an air of authority. Walton, whose election to the Hall of Fame was expected to be announced in early February, keynoted four championships at UCLA, the Trailblazers and, of course, here in Boston in 1986 with the Celtics.

Walton works for several different networks broadcasting basketball and was in town for the Larry Bird Retirement Night in early February. Unfortunately, his memories of the Celtics far outshine his perception of the current team.

"I grew up rooting for the Celtics, which was sometimes a hard thing to do in southern California," Walton commented. "I rooted for the teams of Bill Russell and I modeled my game after him. But this team doesn't even begin to approach the teams of old."

Walton's comments follow in this edition of Man to Man.

***Celtics Pride:* Bill, you've been outspoken in your criticisms of the Celtics. Are there specific problems that leap out at you?**

Bill Walton: I'm not going to deny (the criticisms). The Celtics have major problems, in terms of both leadership and their execution on the floor.

***CP:* Please elaborate.**

BW: When you look out there, the team lacks a style. I thought they would be able to run better then they have, but their problems at the point guard — and the injury to Ed Pinckney — has prevented that from happening. In turn, this has decreased their intensity at the defensive end. What it amounts to is that the team apparently lacks direction for too much of the game, and it's difficult to watch, because I care so much about and really believe in Celtics Pride.

***CP:* How do you change things?**

BW: I believe the team has to make a commitment to restructure completely. Robert Parish has played great this season; he still has it and should be solid as a foundation in the pivot. Kevin McHale, though, has struggled, and in deciding whether he should continue, he really has to consider how much stress playing is placing on his legs.

Major moves are needed and the team needs to look at how a number of new, younger players could fit in. Steps should be taken to clear room under the structure of the (salary) cap. They need to take a risk. Nobody thought Larry Bird would be able to change the team the way he did when he first came out, and his selection at the time was considered risky. He not only changed the Celtics, he changed the entire league.

***CP:* You were here for the Larry Bird retirement ceremonies. How were your perceptions of Bird changed as a result of having played with him?**

BW: There aren't enough stories that can be said about Larry. Saying he changed the game entirely summarizes it. When I was finally able to play consistently again in 1983, before my trade here, it was an ambition of mine to someday play with him. To be on the 1986 championship team was a thrill. We spoke before of Kevin and Robert; the way the three of them complemented one another was basketball at its best. Bird brought an enthusiasm and a seriousness to the game that made everyone around him better. He and Magic changed the game over, from different coasts.

***CP:* Obviously, Bird's impact on the team is more clearly seen now, if that's possible.**

BW: Everyone knew Larry's influence on this team! The Celtics were influenced by Larry Bird even when he was on the injured list. Both his absence from the Celtics and Magic Johnson's absence from the Lakers illustrates this critical point: in order for a team to seriously challenge for the championship, they really need the great player to enable them to rise above the "very good" category. But as I said, I don't think the Celtics are even approaching that now.

***CP:* Is it a problem of motivation? Is Chris Ford at fault?**

BW: Chris Ford is an excellent young coach. The problem is players, and talent. Jerry West may have exacted years of frustration regarding his former career as a player when he would compete against the Celtics and lose, every year. He stuck the Celtics with Sherman Douglas' $16 million salary, and completely disrupted the Celtics' ability to maneuver under the salary cap.

***CP:* Are there enough good players coming out of the draft to help if the Celtics were to move up?**

BW: I haven't researched the draft extensively, but my sources have indicated that the draft will be upgraded because there's a very good chance underclassmen such as Anfernee Hardaway, Chris Webber and Jamal Mashburn will come out.

Of these, I like Hardaway the most. There's suitable talent in the draft and I think the Celtics should be looking in that direction.

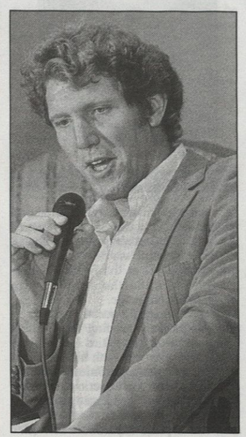
***CP:* In this season's race, are the Bulls a serious threat to win again?**

BW: I think they are, but it's too early to predict. It is critical they stay away from injuries, it's critical that Michael Jordan stay focused, although I don't think there's much doubt that he will. Phoenix has become a serious, a very serious, contender in the West, and it's because of their aggressive attitude. The teams that play best are the ones who are able to go out there and just perform, the teams that have the players as the stars and are not held back by their coaches. Phil Jackson has shown that he's able to exert just enough control. That's the way the Suns are playing, too.

In the East, I think the Knicks are a threat, as is Cleveland. I'm not sure, though, if Cleveland has enough, for the same reasons I spoke about before. Cleveland has three very good players in Mark Price, Brad Daugherty and Larry Nance. But I don't know if they have the truly great one to extend them past that final hurdle. They certainly have the coaching.

***CP:* Your election into the hall of Fame must have been quite an honor. How did that make you feel?**

BW: It was the realization of a lifelong dream. I was fortunate enough to play for five hall of Fame coaches and I loved The Game — playing, competing, winning. The regret I had was that for too long, I kept getting injured. But it's behind me now and I'm just hoping that the great teams I contributed to will now be recognized. There certainly is no greater game. ●



Bill: "I believe the team has to make a commitment to restructure completely."

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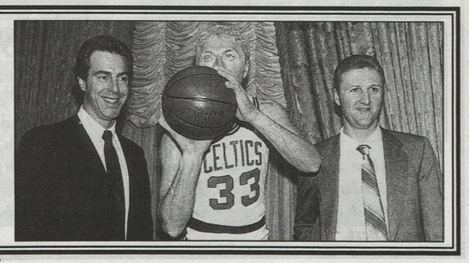
Dave Cowens on Larry Bird:

"You can't use the same words that are used for everybody else. Some words are reserved for the great ones…but the way I look at it is like this: Everybody's got a go-to player. There's 27 of those, right? If you put all those guys together, who would the go-to-guy be? And now, you're looking at a someone who continued to be a go-to-guy for a long period of time."



HALFCOURT PRESS

STRIKING A NERVE

By Kevin C. Doyle

It was a heckuva kickoff for Mediocre Sunday (only the Cowboys played well, so it doesn't qualify as Super).

Bill Walton, working the NBC pre-game show at the Celtics-Lakers game, broached the subject with blunt, harsh language.

Responding to a question posed by Hannah Storm regarding the Celtics' direction in the post-Bird era, Walton didn't mince words with his emphatic reply. In a nutshell, Walton said the Celtics lacked both direction and leadership, that they possessed little substance and style and that they were deficient in the pride department as well.

Walton went on to say that the Celtics would be little more than a .500 team for years to come as long as they continued to struggle to make the playoffs, only to be eliminated in the first or second round, rather than playing themselves into a lottery pick for a year or two.

Yikes! Strong stuff that is sure to spark passionate discussion.

At least two Celtics felt Walton was partially on point.

"We are an average team, like 16 others in the NBA. We still haven't developed a style and it's frustrating. We pull out a game we have no business winning in Orlando (116-105, OT) and here we didn't play well," said Kevin McHale, clearly disturbed by the 96-87 loss to the Lakers.

"It's just really discouraging, losing games at home we have no business losing. We don't get after people, we don't rebound and we end up getting in a hole," observed Joe Kleine.

Both points are well-taken. With few exceptions, the Celtics have faced a nightly struggle to nudge their record three games above .500 at 24-21. And, yes, at times they have seemed as aimless as a ship without a rudder.

It is the other part of Walton's observation that strikes a raw nerve.

To say this team lacks pride is flat out wrong. Otherwise, the Celtics could have packed it for the season after their 2-8 start. Since then, they are a reasonably healthy 22-13, working their way back into the playoff race and the Atlantic Division picture behind the bumbling Knicks.

To suggest that a team lose deliberately in order to better its draft status is both ludicrous and improper. Having played briefly in Boston as a key member of the 1986 championship team, Walton should know better anyway. No one in the organization, from top to bottom, would stand for such shenanigans.

To tell a professional athlete to purposely lose calls into question both the athlete's integrity and his competitive spirit. While an athlete might think the team would be better off with a lottery pick or two, no one would consciously allow their play on the court to be affected.

For Walton to suggest that course be taken was both surprising and sad.

That he was so warmly received by the Celtics and the fans at Larry Bird Night four days after he aired his thoughts spoke volumes about the organization's class and the fans' tolerance and understanding that this team is undergoing a metamorphosis.

Change simply doesn't come as easily as Walton would suggest.

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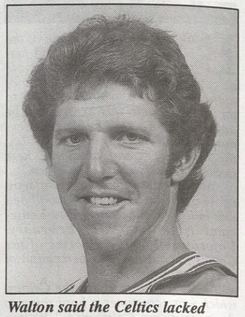
THE GLITTER IS GONE. To say that the edge is off the Celtics-Lakers rivalry is simply stating the obvious. However, when Red Auerbach doesn't make the date, you know it's not a big deal any longer..."We used to be the elite. Times have changed," said Robert Parish. Indeed..."We are still a very proud team. We just have to bust our humps now. First of all, not only are we not as talented, but there are better teams in the league also. Every night is an all-out war — there are no more easy nights. You can't look at the schedule anywhere and say, "That's four wins right there." ...Speaking of Parish, he recently passed Elvin Hayes on the all-time list of games played and is now second at 1,305 and counting. The leader is Kareem Abdul-Jabbar at 1,560...After several productive performances, Alaa Abdelnaby pulled a DNP-CD against the Lakers... Bad news regarding Ed Pinckney, whose knee injury may shelve him for the season...When the Celtics made their trip to Orlando, Dee Brown made a side visit to his alma mater, Jacksonville, which retired his college number (4)... In that OT win at Orlando, McHale scored seven consecutive points in the extra session while Reggie Lewis had a game-high 28... Cedric Maxwell's reception at Larry Bird Night was truly heart-warming. Maxwell did not leave on the best of terms when the Celtics dealt him for Walton back in 1985, but the fans clearly remember him as "Cornbread" and not as "Mad Max," according him a lengthy ovation. Selected as the presenter of a gift to Bird from the '91 championship team, Maxwell came up with one of the night's funnier lines when he said, "Larry, we'd like to present you with this...what the hell is this, anyway?" It was a gold commemorative Bird coin...USA Basketball President and Celtics' CEO Dave Gavitt presented Bird with his Olympic Basketball championship ring. The 10-carat yellow gold rings each have five diamonds, depicting the Olympic rings. ●

Kevin Doyle covers the Celtics and is the Sports Editor for the Newburyport Daily News in Newburyport, Massachusetts.



Walton said the Celtics lacked both direction and leadership.

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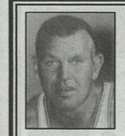
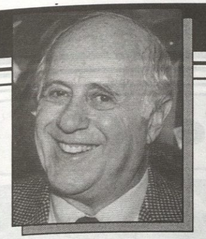


Jim Loscutoff on Larry Bird:

"He's probably the greatest player I've ever seen as far as an individual player, team player and everything else. He revolutionized the game for the big man. He was a bigger man than Magic Johnson, but Magic was strictly a playmaker type. Larry could do everything. As far as I'm concerned, you talk about Bill Russell, Bob Cousy, John Havlicek — all those greats who played with Celtics — and this guy was probably the greatest. Bird was the best."

ASK RED



By Red Auerbach

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you have a question for Red, please address your letters to Celtics Pride, *85 Old Long Ridge Road, Stamford, CT 06903.*

Dear Red,

In the NBA Box Scores, how is Team Rebound defined?

Jim O'Donnell
Chico, California

Thank you for your letter. In every game, each possession needs to be accounted for. So, for example, if a loose ball goes out of bounds and is awarded to a team, even if there was not a clear rebound *per se,* the team is credited with a rebound in the team category. This applies to missed foul shots as well, for example, when the same situation applies. If the ball goes out of bounds, it is awarded to the correct team and the statistic is credited as a team rebound. Another situation that comes to mind is a team retaining a jump ball, i.e., if the ball is loose and is picked up by a team and it is impossible to determine who the player was. A team rebound may be awarded in that instance as well.

Dear Red,

Why has Rick Fox's playing time dropped in recent weeks? After having a solid rookie season, it seems as if Coach Ford doesn't have enough faith in him to increase his playing time. Do you think he has a place in the team's rotation?

Susan Albert
Raleigh, NC

Note: The same question was asked by Wendy Smith.

I appreciate your letters. There is nothing wrong with Rick Fox. After we received your letters, Rick, for example, went out and played another solid game, this one against the Golden State Warriors in early February. The way I see it is that Rick is going through an extended growing period as a player. We still believe in both Rick's ability as a player, as well as his approach as a player. He has worked very hard to shake himself out of his period of inactivity. I think we're beginning to see the results.

Dear Red,

I know it's early, but what do you feel you need to do after this season is over to come out stronger next season? I realize the season is only half over, but it will be an uphill struggle the rest of the way. I think it's very important for NBA teams to come out of the chute quickly if they are going to have an impact. Will there be any trades in the near future, or will you wait until the season is over for that possibility?

Johnny Halpern
Burlington, VT

Thank you for your letter. I couldn't agree with you more. Throughout our history, we have been strong starters and this often determined the way our championship road went. When I coached, I would run very hard, well-organized training camps, and the result was we would always be in better shape (far better) than our opponents. We'd be up by as many as ten games many times, before the season was halfway through. One way it helped was we had the home court throughout the playoffs. And if players were injured, we could rest them without endangering our spot in the standings. Recent history is the same — when Larry Bird played, we were always out of the gate quickly.

This season was another story, as you know. But you can't forget our injuries (Kevin McHale, Ed Pinckney), and you have to realize the tremendous adjustment our team had to make to compensate for Larry's retirement. The truth is, a team never makes that adjustment entirely. The Lakers are going through the same thing without Magic Johnson and we went through this before, when Bill Russell retired in 1969. We are working hard in deciding the look of our team, both for the rest of the season and for next season as well. We think Alaa Abdelnaby may help. We are listening to offers and will consider moves. Right now, we're trying to battle our way into the playoffs.

Dear Red,

I was reading before the season started that Xavier McDaniel is only effective during the playoffs. It was said he doesn't bring the intensity needed for every regular season game. How do you think he's played for the team thus far? I think he's played well when I've seen him this year. Also, what is Larry Bird's actual job, and is he over his back problems?

Elliot Driggs
Aurora, CO

Thank you for your letter. I agree with your views; I think Xavier McDaniel has played very well, and very consistently for us. He's played with nagging aches, he's played off the bench and as a starter, he's played both small and power forward. Xavier McDaniel has been a tremendous asset to our club. Larry is doing an excellent job both in scouting and in consulting on the present team's problems. He's very committed to helping us regain our spot at or near the top of the league. He is still experiencing pain in his back and is undergoing tests. A determination will be made next month on how Bird should be treated for that problem.

Dear Red,

What do you think the Celtics have to do to get back to the top? It's fairly obvious that the team you now have in Boston has no chance at an NBA title. I love Kevin McHale and Robert Parish, but when are you folks going to realize that they could be gone any day in the near future and you have no one to fill in? Joe Kleine is an adequate backup center, but that's all. Lorenzo Williams and Marcus Webb certainly aren't answers. Xavier McDaniel is also a veteran with a history of knee problems whose best days are behind him. Dee Brown and Reggie Lewis are definitely good young talents, but it will take more than a couple of hustling shooters to grab another banner for the Garden rafters. I don't mean to be too critical, but it's time for the Celtics to make some bold moves or they'll be stuck in the middle of the road for many years to come.

Richard Ferraro
Danbury, CT

We are working extraordinarily hard to rebuild our basketball team, but it's not as simple as you state, to make "bold moves." We still think Robert Parish is a very good center for us this season and, although Kevin struggled early, he's played well for us in recent games. People may tire of hearing it, but the salary cap has blocked moves we've tried to make, but I won't ask for forgiveness for deciding on our team. We've been hurt by Ed Pinckney's injury this season; and we can only draft players and put them in there. How they perform or respond to situations is not something you can predict with one hundred percent certainty. We realize we're in need of frontcourt help for the future and it's something we're addressing.

We will look into frontcourt prospects, but if competing as hard as we can for success in the playoffs is viewed as a mistake, then those who criticize are entitled to think the way they do. We structured a team around Robert, Kevin and Larry Bird for the past five years. This season, with Larry retired and Eddie Pinckney hurt, we have struggled, as all teams would in similar situations. Contrary to what you think, we feel Xavier McDaniel is a solid addition, and we have a high opinion of young players such as Rick Fox and, we hope, Alaa Abdelnaby. We're hard at work rebuilding, but I won't tear down some positive things that are going on now. ●

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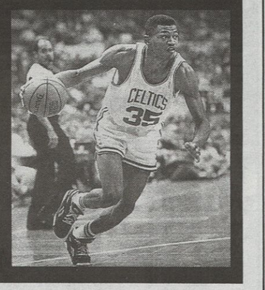

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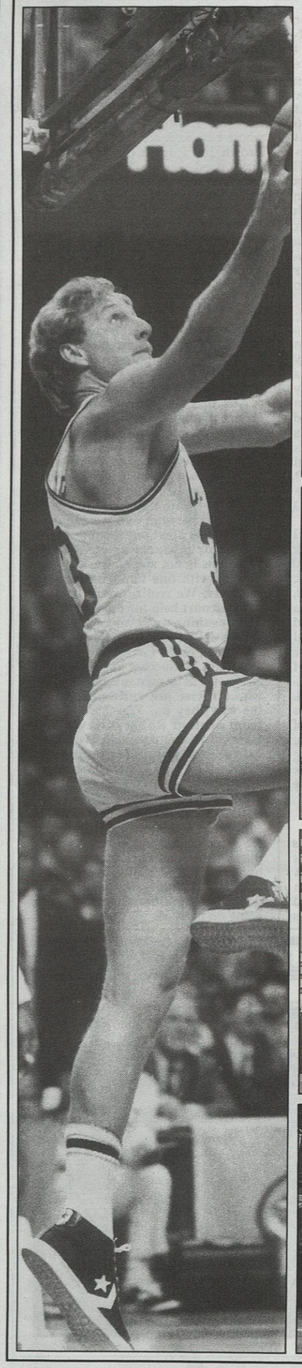
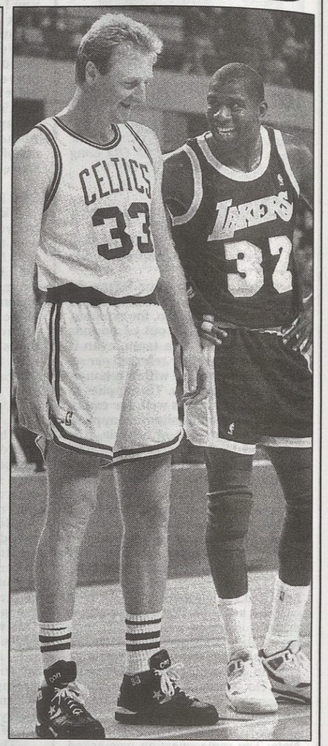
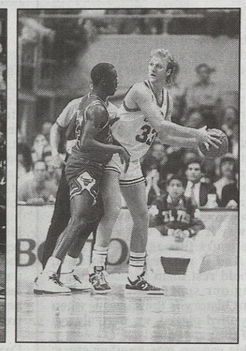
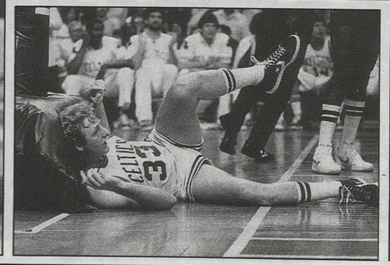
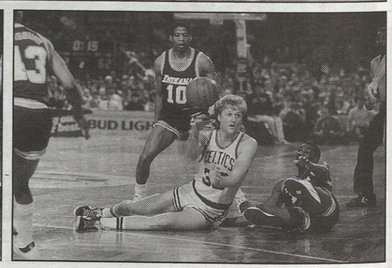
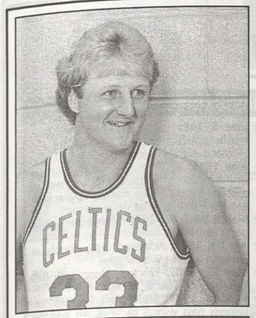


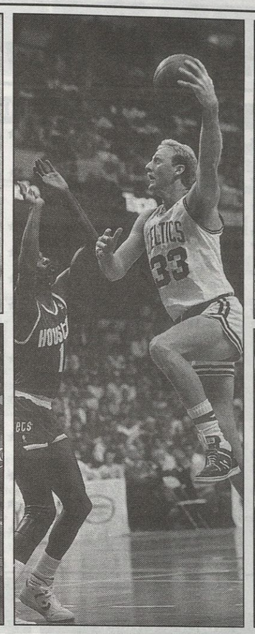


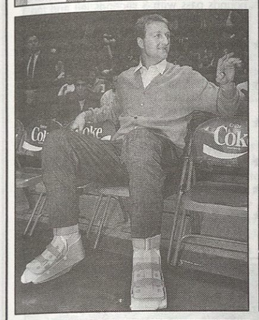


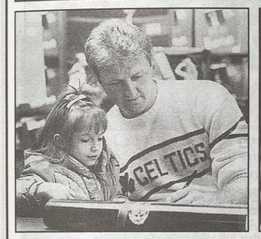


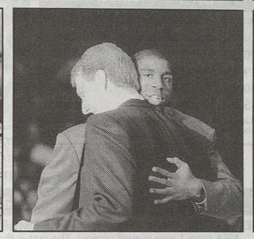


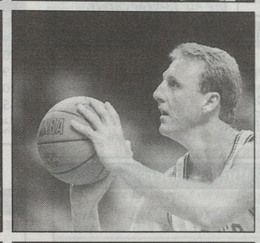


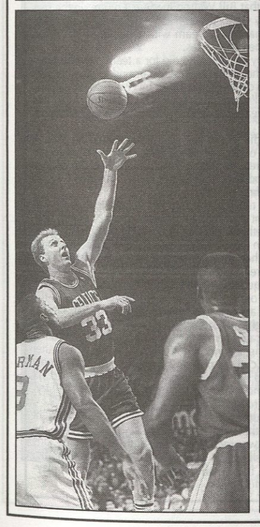


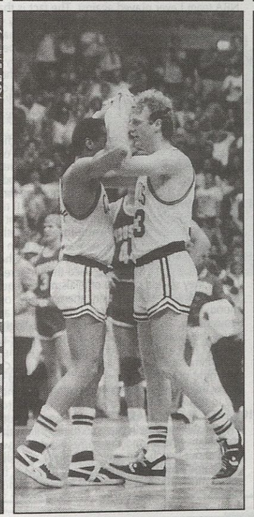


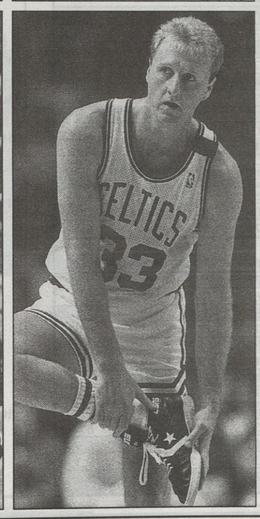












CELTICS PRIDE

Larry Bird: One of a Kind

Larry Bird's First Year

ATTENDANCE

1978		10,193
1979		14,193

VICTORIES

1978		29
1979		61

HOME VICTORIES

1978		21
1979		35

Bird's Impact on Celtics

REGULAR SEASON RECORD

Without Bird	91-78	.538
With Bird	660-237	.736

POST-SEASON RECORD

Without Bird	5-7	.417
With Bird	99-65	.604

PLAYOFF APPEARANCES

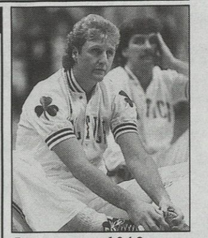
13 Years Before Bird	9
13 Years With Bird	13

Larry Bird Highlights

★ **August 1975:** Entered Indiana University, but did not play; transferred to Indiana State the next year
★ **June 1978:** Drafted by Celtics in the first round (6th pick) as a junior eligible
★ **April 1979:** Named *The Sporting News* college player of the year
★ **June 1980:** Voted NBA rookie of the year
★ **January 3, 1981:** Held scoreless at Golden State, for the only time in his career
★ **May 14, 1981:** Made three-pointer against Houston to clinch game and his first championship with the Celtics
★ **January 31, 1982:** Named All-Star Game MVP
★ **June 8, 1984:** Despite 97° temperature inside Boston Garden, scored 34 points in Game 5 victory over the Lakers in NBA Finals; four days later he was named playoff MVP; last time a player has scored at least 20 points in each game of a 7-game NBA Finals
★ **June 1984:** Won first regular season MVP
★ **January 11, 1985:** Scored 10,000th point against Washington
★ **January 27 & 29, 1985:** Consecutive game-winning buzzer beaters against Portland and Detroit
★ **March 12, 1985:** Set team record with 60 points against Atlanta
★ **June 1985:** Won second regular season MVP
★ **December 1986:** Named the *Sporting News* man of the year, *Associated Press* male athlete of the year
★ **June 8, 1986:** Named playoff MVP after triple-double helped Celtics defeat Houston in the NBA Finals
★ **June 1986:** Became one of three players in NBA history (with Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell) to be named regular season MVP three consecutive seasons
★ **March 20 & 22, 1987:** Consecutive 40+ point games.
★ **April 1, 1987:** Achieved triple-double at halftime against Washington
★ **May 23, 1987:** Ejected, along with Bill Laimbeer of Detroit, for fighting
★ **May 26, 1987:** Stole Isiah Thomas' inbounds pass with 5 seconds left and fed Dennis Johnson for the winning basket to give the Celtics a Game 5 playoff victory
★ **November 11, 1987:** Had Celtics' first 40/20 game (42 points/20 rebounds) against Indiana
★ **May 22, 1988:** In Game 7 victory over Atlanta, scored 34 points, including 20 (9 of 10 field goals) in fourth quarter
★ **February 13, 1990:** Had the second-best (Calvin Murphy, 78, #1) free-throw streak in NBA history ended at 71
★ **November 14, 1990:** Had 5,000th assist against Charlotte
★ **November 30, 1990:** 15th player to score 20,000 points (against Washington)
★ **June 7, 1991:** Had two-hour back surgery on ruptured disc, which ultimately ended his career

Celtics Records with Larry Bird

Year	Won	Lost	Div. Fin.	Playoffs
1979-80	61	21	1	Lost conference finals
1980-81	62	20	1	Won NBA Finals
1981-82	63	19	1	Lost conference finals
1982-83	56	26	2	Lost conference semis
1983-84	62	20	1	Won NBA Finals
1984-85	63	19	1	Lost NBA Finals
1985-86	67	15	1	Won NBA Finals
1986-87	59	23	1	Lost NBA Finals
1987-88	57	25	1	Lost conference finals
1988-89	42	40	3	Lost conference 1 round
1989-90	52	30	2	Lost conference 1 round
1990-91	56	26	1	Lost conference semis
1991-92	51	31	1	Lost conference semis

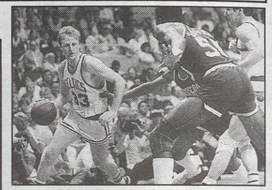


Larry averaged 24.3 ppg, 10.0 rpg and 6.4 apg during his 13-year career.

Bird vs. Magic

Bird*	% of Teams's Totals	Magic
19.7%	Points	15.4%
20.2%	Rebounds	14.6%
19.6%	Steals	19.3%
20.9%	Assists	34.8%
45.7%	3-pointers	21.4%

*Larry Bird's Totals exclude the 1988-89 season, when he only played 6 games.



Larry became only the 15th player to score 20,000 points on the night of November 30, 1990.

Larry Bird's Ranking on All-Time Lists

REGULAR SEASON Category	Total	Rank	PLAYOFFS Category	Total	Rank
Free Throw %	.886	4	Assists	1,062	2
3-pointers	649	4	Steals	296	2
Steals	1,556	8	Points	3,897	3
Field Goals	8,591	10	Field Goals	1,458	3
Points	21,791	11	Rebounds	1,683	7

Larry Bird's Career by the Numbers

Year	Games Played	FG Pct.	FT Pct.	3-pt. Pct.	Avg. Pts.	Avg. Reb.	Avg. Asst.
REGULAR SEASON							
1979-80	82	.474	.836	.406	21.3	10.4	4.5
1980-81	82	.478	.863	.270	21.2	10.9	5.5
1981-82	77	.503	.863	.212	22.9	10.9	5.8
1982-83	79	.504	.840	.276	23.6	11.0	5.8
1983-84	79	.492	.888	.247	24.2	10.1	6.6
1984-85	80	.522	.882	.427	28.7	10.5	6.6
1985-86	82	.496	.896	.423	25.8	9.8	6.8
1986-87	74	.525	.910	.400	28.1	9.2	7.7
1987-88	76	.527	.916	.414	29.9	9.3	6.2
1988-89	6	.471	.947	—	19.3	6.2	4.8
1989-90	75	.473	.930	.333	24.3	9.5	7.5
1990-91	60	.454	.891	.389	19.4	8.5	7.2
1991-92	45	.466	.926	.406	20.2	9.7	6.8
Totals	**897**	**.496**	**.888**	**.376**	**24.3**	**10.0**	**6.4**
PLAYOFFS							
1979-80	9	.469	.880	.267	21.3	11.2	4.7
1980-81	17	.470	.894	.375	21.9	14.0	6.1
1981-82	12	.427	.822	.167	17.8	12.5	5.6
1982-83	6	.422	.828	.250	20.5	12.5	6.8
1983-84	23	.524	.879	.412	27.5	11.0	6.0
1984-85	20	.461	.890	.280	26.0	9.1	5.8
1985-86	18	.517	.927	.411	25.9	9.3	8.2
1986-87	23	.476	.912	.341	27.0	10.0	7.2
1987-88	17	.450	.894	.375	24.5	10.0	6.8
1988-89	Injured and did not play						
1989-90	5	.444	.906	.263	24.4	9.2	8.8
1990-91	10	.408	.863	.143	17.1	7.2	6.5
1991-92	4	.500	.750	.000	11.3	4.5	5.3
Totals	**164**	**.472**	**.890**	**.321**	**23.8**	**10.3**	**6.5**

Larry Says:

BEST CELTICS TEAM. Had to be '85-86. I would honestly put that team up against any NBA team I ever played against. The fact is that Bill Walton made everyone on the second team almost twice as good as they really were. You can second-guess all you want, of course, but I would have loved to play that '87 LA team with a healthy Bill Walton and Len Bias. Now *that* would have been a hell of a series.

MOST UNDERRATED CELTIC. Easy. M.L. Carr, by far. What he did for a team, how he practiced, the way he motivated. I always thought he should have stuck around for another year or two. You could never find a 12th man who could do the things he could do for a team.

MOST UNDERRATED OPPONENT. Tough one. I'm partial to guys who rebound, a guy like Sidney Green. Someone who could score, yeah, but who could come in and rebound, most of all.

THE 3-POINT SHOT. I don't like it, and I never did like it. A 2-point lead should be enough to at least get you into overtime at the end of a game. It's a joke. Yes, I used it to our advantage, but we could live without it. I guess I'm just old-fashioned. And the college and high school shot is a total joke. It's a good thing they didn't have that when I was in school. I'd have spent all my time shooting threes.

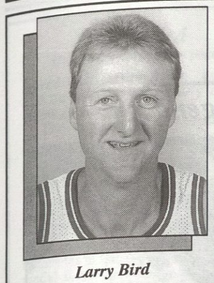
BEST RIVALRY. Philly, not LA. We'd play 'em 10 times a year. My first (exhibition) game was against Dr. J in Madison Square Garden. Right after that we played 'em in Portland, I believe, and when we beat 'em it meant something. LA was great, especially in a seven-game series, but to me nothing was better than those Philly games when I first started out.

REFEREES. I've got sympathy for most of 'em, when they come to work. You can tell when they don't. I don't think you need three referees, either. It's a waste of money and time. I think they should change officials more frequently. I don't think anyone should referee for 20 years. Fifteen is plenty, then get new ones. Jake O'Donnell, when he was in the mood, was the best referee I ever saw. I also remember the fourth game against Houston in '86. Darell (Garretson) and Yogi (Earl Strom) did it, and you never even knew they was there. No one questioned a call. I remember another game when someone got hurt and Earl Strom had to referee the second half alone. He called us together at halftime and said, "If anyone tries to get cute or pull any funny business, I'll throw him right out of the game." And the second half went great. Some of them just don't know the NBA game. They just don't have the knack. And one more thing: I'm still trying to figure out why so many officials seem to be 5'5 or 5'6.

BIGGEST CELTIC CHARACTER. M.L. again, although Max (Cedric Maxwell) was right there. I still can't believe some of the things that went on in those days. We'd be on the road somewhere, and the game would be wrapped up. M.L. would turn to the fans behind our bench and say, "You might as well put on your coats and go beat the traffic. This game's over." Max used to say that M.L. had an advantage because he wasn't playing as much and had more time to work on his lines.

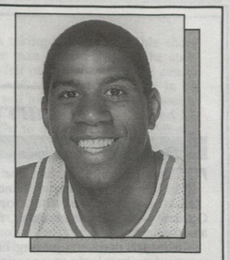
PERSPECTIVE

WHAT MADE LARRY BIRD SO SPECIAL?



Larry Bird

Larry Bird — *I never put on a uniform to play a game. I put on a uniform to win.*

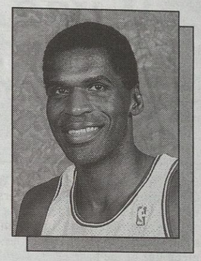


Magic Johnson

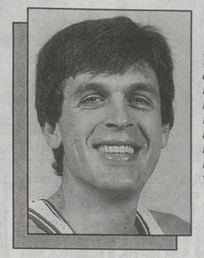
Magic Johnson *(Larry's NCAA and NBA arch-rival and close friend)* — *His will to win is greater than anyone I've ever seen. He's the only player I ever feared, because if you gave him a chance to win a game in the final second, you always thought he was going to do it. He caused me a lot of sleepless nights. Believe me.*

On February 4, the Celtics organization paid tribute to the most celebrated, and arguably greatest, player in their storied history. In the days leading up to "Larry Bird Night," and, then, over the course of the evening, many of the people most closely associated with Larry were given an opportunity to try to sum up exactly what it was that made him so special to the game of basketball, to the Celtics, to the city of Boston and to them personally. Below is a small sampling of the responses.

Robert Parish — *The most impressive thing about Larry was his clutch play and his work ethic. He never took a day off. He always came to play. If anyone could afford to take a day off or a practice off it was Larry, but he never did. Larry was such a gifted athlete that he drew so much attention and made our games so much better. If there's anybody I could have had on my side, I'd rather have him no matter what state his body was in.*

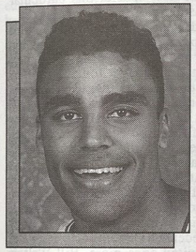


Robert Parish



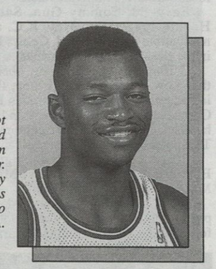
Kevin McHale

Kevin McHale — *He's been a joy to play with. He took so much pressure off his teammates. I actually enjoy the role I've had more than if I had been the main focus myself. Larry has a will of iron. If the game is close, I wanted him to have the ball.*



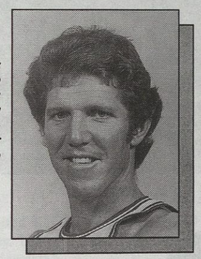
Rick Fox

Rick Fox — *It was an honor to be part of the team with Larry and watch him retire. But it all happened so quick. I didn't think it was going to happen for another year or two. I'm just happy I can say I played with him. He made my job out on the court so much easier.*



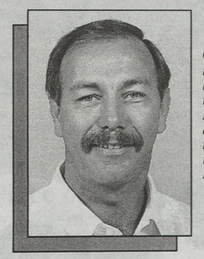
Reggie Lewis

Reggie Lewis — *I'm just happy I got the opportunity to play with him. I had a chance to learn a great deal from him. He was such a great competitor. He just had a winning attitude every time he stepped on the floor. He always came ready to play and that meant so much to the Celtics and the NBA.*



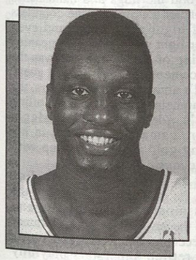
Bill Walton

Bill Walton — *Larry was one of those players who didn't play basketball; he lived it. The magic of Larry Bird was not on the basketball court or in the locker room. It was his ability to create atmosphere.*



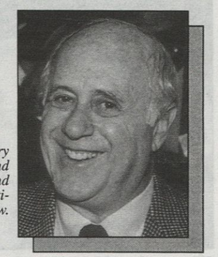
Chris Ford

Chris Ford — *The thing I'll remember most about him is the way he passed the ball. When he first came into the league in that first training camp the first thing I remember noticing was his passing ability. He was about making his teammates better, and that is the lasting impact that he and Magic had on the NBA. They made passing the ball fun.*



Dee Brown

Dee Brown — *Larry did a lot for me, especially in my first year. He kind of took me under his wing and he helped me out a lot. He helped me gain a lot of confidence in myself. He meant the most to me off the court. He kept my head into it and kept telling me I was a good player and that in a few years I was going to be a great player if I just keep working at it. As a rookie, sometimes your confidence gets down, and hearing these things from someone like him really helped.*



Red Auerbach

Red Auerbach — *Larry is the greatest all around player who ever lived. And he's the most self motivated athlete I ever saw.*

The Ultimate Garden Party

"Larry Bird Night" Was a Fitting Salute to a Boston Legend

By Jim Bianchine

They came to hail him one last time on February 4, beneath the banners at the Boston Garden — former teammates, fans and foes alike.

In return their conquering hero, wearing a shamrock on one sleeve and his heart on the other, showed them the same adoration he had received for 13 seasons in the Hub.

Larry Bird Night was an extravaganza, a gala few athletes will ever know. It was a fitting salute to a man whose talents were extraordinary, his desire without equal.

Bird was the embodiment of Celtics pride and a delegation of sports dignitaries and a packed house gave him a final send off in a grand and glorious last hurrah with all the proceeds going to charity.

The 2-1/2 hour program, filled with humor, was capped by a laser light show accompanying the hoisting of his number 33 to the hallowed rafters, joining 15 other all-time Celtics greats.

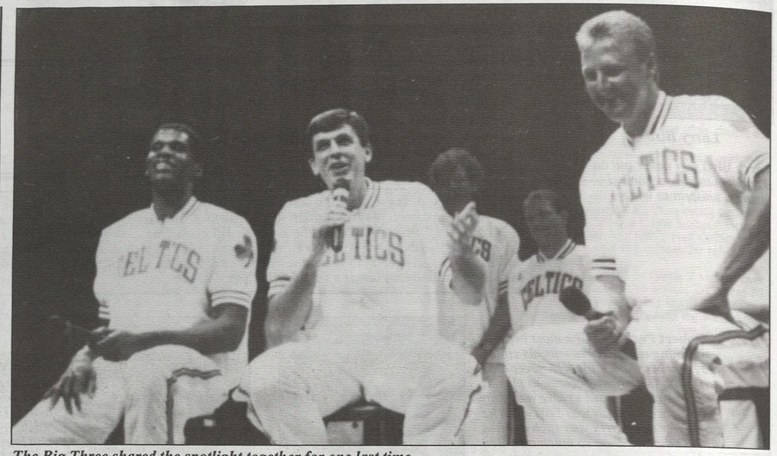
The salute began on a platform of parquet at center court with the Celtics logo proudly emblazoned at center stage. The feeling of family with all the past and present Celtics faces was never more prevalent.

Easy-Ed, Tommy-Gun, Satch, Hondo, Jungle Jim, Tiny, K.C. and many more were on hand, Celtics lore in the flesh for the fitting tribute.

Celtics CEO Dave Gavitt opened the show welcoming everyone, then introduced master of ceremonies Bob Costas, whose smooth delivery and wit have made him the most celebrated TV sports personality in America.

Costas began by introducing the Bird family, brothers Eddie, Mike, Mark and Jack and sister Linda.

When he introduced Ma Bird, the place erupted into a standing ovation for Georgia. After introducing Larry's wife Dinah and young son Connor, Costas introduced the "second family," the Celtics' current team.



The Big Three shared the spotlight together for one last time.

Captain Reggie Lewis presented Georgia Bird with a golden necklace adorned with jewels, a shamrock surrounding the number 33.

The program featured countless magic moments on screen of Bird's career, the first coming just before the man himself.

When Larry Bird walked out in his Celtics warmups, the traditional chants of "Larry…Larry…Larry" rang from the rafters, rocking the creaky old place.

But it was only the beginning.

The program was a chronology of Bird's career, in perfect order. The first assemblage was the 1981 World Championship squad, the first of three title teams he played on.

They paraded out in warmups, striding into the arena like the long green line of the past.

Each team had designated speakers. The one for the 1981 team was Cedric Maxwell, who played a major role in the title run.

Never lost for words, he recalled Bird's first practice as a rookie.

"I remember going up against him in practice and 20-footers raining down on me. All I said was 'this white boy can really play'," said Max as the crowd roared with laughter.

Though Bird has often admitted he thought the 1986 Celtics may have been the best ever assembled, he later spoke of how special this particular unit was to him.

Bird was presented with a solid gold commemorative coin from his former mates, following a journey back in time with a touching video tribute to that particular team responsible for banner number 14.

The 1984 team paraded out for more of the same and Quinn Buckner presented Bird with a watch with 33 on its face.

Next it was time to relive a little more of the past as the 1985-86 team was brought on, the last to hang a championship banner, the Celtics' unprecedented 16th.

Reunited once more, Bill Walton spoke of how he "felt blessed" to have been Bird's teammate and Costas called Bird, Kevin McHale and Robert Parish the greatest front line in the history of the game.

Dennis Johnson, who was singled out as the "best teammate he has ever played with" by Bird, handed the honoree an inscribed piece of the parquet floor.

But the most touching moment of all, beyond the hugs and handshakes from former teammates, the countless reels of highlight footage and even the laser light show that accompanied the raising of Bird's number, was the announcement of a very special guest.

Bird's archrival over the years, the man who helped him to cure an ailing league's identity crisis, Magic Johnson, came strolling out in his gleaming gold Lakers warmup with dramatic music blaring.

Just as Bird had the struggling Celtics, he and Johnson became the game's most revered players and revived the pro game and its fortunes to unprecedented popularity.

The retired superstars playfully

Continued on following page

Whoever thought they'd see the day that Magic Johnson would be wearing a Celtics' T-shirt?

Larry Bird

Continued from previous page

stared each other down, as they had on the court so many times, before embracing.

The crowd again erupted as Johnson was received as if he was one of the Hub's own. When he unsnapped his warmup and flashed a Celtics shirt, he was no longer the enemy.

Magic spoke with sincerity and compassion about Bird as two giants of the game, who began their careers together and ended them fittingly as teammates in Barcelona winning a gold medal for their country in August, stood side by side one final time.

"He's the best all-around player who ever played the game. I feared him more than anybody else," said Johnson, who after the ceremony said, "I think God meant us to be together."

Johnson talked about the first time the two really spoke and became friends over dinner at Georgia Bird's home.

Bird responded in kind. "There's no question he's the best player I've ever seen," said Bird of his rival and friend.

Shortly after Bird was presented his Olympic ring, emblematic of his country's triumph.

The Lakers family presented Bird with a piece of the Fabulous Forum and Magic handed Bird a Lakers jersey with his name on the back.

Bird jokingly pretended to toss it into the crowd, snickering.

Bird and Magic fittingly presented each other with their game jerseys, each signing it, acknowledging the other as the greatest basketball player ever.

But the preceding moment may have been the most touching of the evening.

Johnson closed his long oration of praise by saying, "Larry lied to me just one time. He told me there will be another Larry Bird someday. There will never be another Larry Bird," said Johnson as a choked up crowd wildly cheered the two.

Last, but not least, the man responsible for bringing Bird to Boston, Red Auerbach, along with renowned artist LeRoy Neiman, unveiled the artist's work of art — a five-foot painting of Bird's famous step-back jumper, the Celtics' retirement gift to the living legend.

"My only regret is that I didn't coach him," said Auerbach, the team's president.

Most sensed the end to not only the marvelous show, but the last real glimpses of Larry Bird, were near. The man known in some Boston basketball circles as The Messiah was not impervious to age or pain and there wasn't anything anyone could do to stop the inevitable.

Yet in their collective hearts, they felt great satisfaction knowing the man who helped revitalize the Celtics and, along with Magic, revolutionize basketball, would never let his legacy be tarnished. If he had to leave, he would leave them all with a trove of lasting memories.

The curtain was about to close on maybe the most complete player to ever lace his sneakers, a man by whom all others will be judged by the standards he set, not only in numbers, but in his relentless pursuit of winning.

He imparted wisdom to the young players and his presence was like few others. His motivation was inspirational. Yet, he never worried about his image.

Larry autographed 1,033 copies of the five-foot LeRoy Neiman lithograph, which will be sold at $1,033. All proceeds from the lithographs will go to charities of Larry's choice.

With streaking green lights shooting across the darkened Boston Garden, often taking the unmistakable shape of the man being honored, the spotlight fell on the corner of the court's west end where, with his son in his arm and his wife by his side, amidst deafening chants, Bird raised his number to the rafters to etch himself forever in basketball lore.

After shouts of "we love you Larry" had him on the verge of tears, he spoke candidly, straight from the heart, telling the fans how much they meant to him before raising his hand in a return salute before bowing out in style.

"I'll miss basketball. But most of all, believe it or not, I'll miss the people of Boston," said Bird.

As the gentle strains of John Cougar Mellencamp's "Small Town" filled the arena air, Bird took his final bow to each of the four corners of the building that was like his home. Then a final wave and basketball was without one of its greatest heroes.

But not without its memories that will forever endure. ●

LARRY BIRD'S OLYMPIC GLORY

Own a Piece of Larry Bird History

The limited edition print titled "THE FINAL GLORY" has been created by Larry Bird's favorite artist, Allen Hackney. The prints measure 18" x 24" and come framed or unframed. The print can be purchased in any one of four formats.

- Signed & Numbered Artist Proof **individually autographed by Larry Bird** $350.00
- Signed & Numbered **individually autographed by Larry Bird** $300.00
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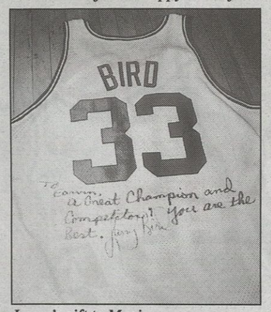
Oh What a Night!

Red salutes probably his greatest "find."

Little Connor was just as happy as his father.

Magic and Larry: A pair of legends.

LeRoy Neiman presents his gift to Larry.



Larry's gift to Magic.

Bill Fitch had some fun with one of his pupils.

The Boston Garden Bull Gang was lurking about in the background as the last teary-eyed spectators filed out of the building following Larry Bird Night, Boston's salute to a legend.

The only thing left now was one final chat with the media before taking down center stage and all the frills that usually don't grace the ancient arena.

His shirt unbuttoned at the top, his suit jacket open and the tie long gone, a relaxed Larry Bird took the makeshift center stage under the house lights.

Bird spoke candidly about his future with no long-range plans. He spoke as candidly as he could shortly following the grandest celebration of his life that now seems somewhat out of focus.

Bird was never one who shied away from a challenge on the court and his makeup makes him the same now that he's off it for good.

"I really don't know what I'm going to do, but I need competition in my life and I know I'm not going to get it from playing," said Bird. "I haven't seen any challenge in my life like basketball yet. I don't think retirement is for me. I'm just 36 years old."

Bird stayed on in the organization to help CEO Dave Gavitt assess young talent, but discounted the possibility of any interest in coaching some day in the informal conference.

"I'll go through a lot of changes in life. I've dedicated my life to basketball for years. I'm going to take one year at a time. I don't know what I'm going to do," he said.

Bird freely admitted his mind wasn't through with the game, but his body had taken enough.

"I probably would have played this year and maybe next year if I was healthy. But it's a lot easier to leave the game if it's an injury," said Bird.

A far more relaxed Bird talked about his night and his feelings. "In the Boards and Blades (Aug. 18) I just told the press I retired. I didn't get a chance to say goodbye to the fans. But this (event) was much bigger than I anticipated.

"I got pretty emotional the day before I retired, but tonight I just wanted to thank the fans for all they did for me. This was a big night, a great night. What I said to the fans tonight came from the heart, not from a script," said Bird.

Bird admitted he was far more relaxed now that the grand event was over, but signs of its afterglow remained clear.

"I know I can't play anymore and I'm glad this night is over with and I can finally put basketball to rest and come to grips with reality.

"The pressure is off me now as far as scoring the last basket. That pressure is gone and it's a good feeling," said Bird, who again harkened back to 1981, which seems to be among his favorite memories.

"Yeah, 1981 was a very special team. When we won it we hugged each other because that night was so special. None of us had really ever won anything and that win gave us a lot of pride to keep with us," he said.

Questions again centered around his gala event while, just as they had in their basketball lives, Bird was doing his thing in one end of the arena and Magic Johnson was holding court in a makeshift press area with hastily hung curtains in the other.

"It's hard to put into words, the feeling we have for one another," said Johnson.

"There's a lot of emotion. You're sad he's leaving, but happy he's your friend.

"I think God meant us to be together. We are so similar, it is scary. It (friendship) was meant to be.

"People are going to miss two guys kicking it, doing anything it takes to win," said Johnson, who was very moved by the whole evening.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd come into the Boston Garden and get a standing ovation. I've always said Boston Celtics fans are truly the greatest fans.

"This night was good for me emotionally. Being a part of this was great. I didn't come with a prepared speech. I just spoke from the heart.

"I love him as a friend. He's been there for me with this virus. We've cried together. You know what we have is something special.

"God created this night. What a script for 13 years," said Johnson.

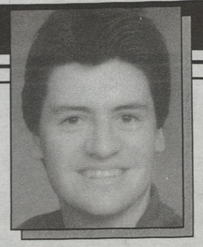
Though he has been asked over and over about championships, Bird admitted what was most important to him now.

"Championship rings are not the most gratifying. Raising those championship banners are great, but the greatest is your name up there with the elite," said Bird, looking skyward to his number proudly hanging from the aging rafters.

"I'm happy tonight. My career is over and is fulfilled."

Before leaving the platform, one he hopes never to have to take again in public, Bird said, "I enjoyed it. It was my last hurrah." ●

NOTHING BUT NET



By Mike Spellman

Goodbye Larry, Hello Mediocrity

As upbeat an event as the February 4th retirement ceremony/love-in for Larry Bird was, I must admit to a persistent malaise ever since.

Watching all that video footage and seeing those championship banners hanging from the rafters as the Celtics honored their greatest teammate had the same effect on me it probably had on just about everyone else in the Garden and viewing on TV that night: it left me recalling all the things that made those teams so great.

At the same time, however, it also brought me face-to-face with the realization of just how ordinary the current team is and how remote the chances are that they'll be back among the NBA's elite anytime soon.

In all the years during the Bird era, even the last two or three, I admit there was always in me at least that small glimmer of hope that maybe with a few breaks the Celtics could get back to the Finals. Now, no matter how optimistic I sometimes get or how many ways I look at the situation, there seems no way to summon up that feeling. My guess is there's a lot of people who feel the same exact way.

Of course, this temporary melancholy would be easier to handle if there was any substantive reason to believe things would be better than they are now in the not too distant future. But, alas, I can not truthfully say this to be the case.

Presently, the team is in sixth place in the 14-team Eastern Conference and most likely headed for the post-season and a draft pick in the mid-teens that very likely won't get them the big time frontcourt player they so desperately need.

The best guess right now for next season is that Kevin McHale will be gone, either by retirement or signing on with a contender, and Robert Parish will be back to join the nucleus of Dee Brown, Reggie Lewis, Kevin Gamble, Rick Fox, Ed Pinckney, Xavier McDaniel and Alaa Abdelnaby. McHale's departure would open up a pretty large slot in the salary cap, but there will reportedly be very little available in the areas Boston management would be looking into. And, as alluded in the previous paragraph, they probably won't be helped much in the draft. All things considered, the 1993-'94 Celtics will probably finish about where this year's team is projected to, good enough to get bounced in the first round of the playoffs and come away with a marginal draft prospect.

Things don't look to get much better, or worse, the following season. Parish will almost certainly be history at that point, which would most likely leave them without a bonafide NBA center. However, Brown, Abdelnaby and Fox will likely be coming into their prime, while Lewis, Gamble, Pinckney and McDaniel will all probably still be going strong, meaning mediocrity would again likely be well within reach.

No doubt a lot of you are probably wondering if I've forgotten about Danny Manning, the guy seemingly every sportstalk host and basketball columnist with a New England audience has touted as the player who will restore us to greatness beginning in the Fall of 1994.

No, I haven't forgotten about Manning. Sure, it's possible the Celtics could use Parish or McHale's salary slot to sign him after the 1993-94 season. He's said repeatedly the Celtics would be his first choice if he had his druthers about where he plays. And I think it's pretty safe to presume that Dave Gavitt and company would do just about anything in their power to get the young franchise forward in a Celtics uniform.

But let's not lose sight of the fact that we're talking about something that MIGHT happen a year and a half from now, and anyone who makes a hobby of following professional sports knows that just about anything can change over that lengthy a period of time.

And, finally, let's not forget about all the teams out there who appear to be on a course of steady improvement over the next few years — Orlando, New Jersey, Miami, Charlotte, Denver, Sacramento and Seattle to name just a few, or about the teams who are already at the pinnacle who look as if they could be there a few more years, most notably Chicago, Portland and Phoenix.

● ● ● ● ●

Am I the only one not laughing about the rumored deal (reported by former Celtic and part-time NBA correspondent Bill Walton on Inside Stuff) that would send Kevin McHale to Seattle in exchange for center Benoit Benjamin and unsigned draft pick Doug Christie.

The rumor was instantly dismissed by Kevin who simply chuckled and advised us to consider the source. Management spokespersons from each club likewise rebutted this speculation.

Naturally, there's no way of confirming whether or not there has been discussion between the two teams concerning this or any other possible deals.

If I were to ever learn that this rumored swap had been discussed recently, however, presuming it is workable under the salary cap, it would be beyond me to explain why it wouldn't be consummated.

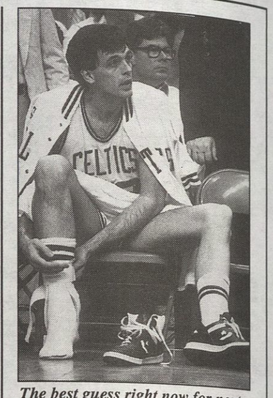
If I were calling the shots in the Supersonics offices, I'd love to add a proven veteran like McHale. First off, you have a team here that is, believe it or not, not all that far away from being a legitimate contender for the NBA championship. The only real glaring weakness that's shown up this year is converting in crunch time. McHale, while not the totally unstoppable low post scorer he once was, is still one of the best in the game at making good things happen out of one-on-one situations on the block. Beyond this, can you imagine how much better Shawn Kemp would be if he learned even one or two of Kevin's pet moves? And giving up Benjamin, who has to date had 10 DNP-CDs and averaged just 15 minutes and seven points in the games he's appeared in, and Christie, who the club has now admittedly all but given up on ever signing, would be an extremely small price to pay compared to the potential gain.

As for Celtics management, they're already anticipating McHale's exit at the end of this season. So, with a run at the championship obviously out of reach, wouldn't it make sense to get something in return while they can? And, from this perspective, they could do a lot worse than Benjamin and Christie.

As anyone who has followed professional basketball in recent years is most likely aware, Benjamin has been one of the NBA's most widely criticized players. Lack of hustle, poor work habits, mysterious injuries, weight problems — Big Ben has produced a veritable cornucopia of undesirable traits in his seven year career. The obvious question is why would the Celtics want him? The obvious answer is they're not likely to get a shot at a better true center anytime soon. Most of Ben's problems were during his early years with the Clippers. Since being traded to Seattle last season, he has, according to team sources, been a good camper. He averaged 14.1 points, 8.1 rebounds and nearly two blocks per game for the Sonics last season, but has been stuck on the bench most of this year as George Karl has installed an up-tempo system to take advantage of his full stable of thoroughbreds. If nothing else, Benjamin is a polished low post scorer, better than average rebounder and a very good shotblocker. Also, he's only 28 years old, so he potentially has several productive years ahead of him. And, who knows, we have seen time and time again that you can not underestimate the affect changing to a Celtics uniform has on a player.

As for the public relations concerns about trading McHale, a career Celtic and one of the most popular athletes in recent Boston sports history, the feeling here is the fallout would be minimal. The majority of Celtic fans realize the main objective at this point needs to be putting together a younger core of players that can develop together. Besides, Kevin has already hinted this year he would like to make one more legitimate run at a championship, and, as we all know, that's not going to happen in Boston for some time. ●

Mike Spellman is a reporter for the Brockton Enterprise in Brockton, Massachusetts.



The best guess right now for next season is that Kevin McHale will be gone, either by retirement or signing on with a contender.

Bill Sharman on Larry Bird:

"There is no doubt that Larry Bird is one of the greatest basketball players ever...Like Magic Johnson, Larry has always had the ability and the compassion to help and improve the performance of all his teammates and mold them into a winning unit."

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The Nation's Top Prospects

Will One of These Big Men Land in Boston?

By Mike Spellman

With the Celtics continuing what will probably be a season long flirtation with the lottery, interest among the team's followers in the 1993 college draft is understandably running higher than normal for this time of the year.

If the season ended today, the Celtics, at 24-21, would finish sixth in the Eastern Conference's 14 team field, and thus in the playoffs and drafting in the early teens, where it would be extremely unlikely they'd find the young frontcourt star they would seem to need before even thinking about a return to the ranks of the NBA elite.

Scores of local fans have already let it be known that they would prefer the team to intentionally fall short of post-season qualification and get into the lottery, despite the fact that the 1993 talent pool appears at this point to be one of the thinnest top to bottom in years.

Even the cream of the senior crop — players such as Tennessee shooting guard Allan Houston, Indiana swingman Calbert Cheaney, Duke point guard Bobby Hurley, Florida State forward Doug Edwards and Hartford big man Vin Baker — aren't considered immediate impact players by many scouts.

In fact, the only seven collegians who scouts by and large laud as potential NBA stars are underclassmen — juniors Jamal Mashburn (Kentucky), Anfernee Hardaway (Memphis State), Grant Hill (Duke), Rodney Rogers (Wake Forest) and Eric Montross (North Carolina) and sophomores Chris Webber (Michigan) and Glen Robinson (Purdue). Given the weak field, it would not be surprising to see several of these along with other prominent younger players apply for early entry to the draft. Thus, there is some reason for hope for the 1993 draft as a whole and, more importantly, for the Celtics outlook.

Below, are thumbnail sketches for the players Celtics Pride considers the top collegiate prospects, players you fans might want to begin checking out for yourselves.

CENTERS

1) Ervin Johnson (6'11/240) New Orleans — An excellent rebounder and shot blocker. Most of his points come off putbacks and by simply overpowering defenders in close, though he continues to work on improving his moves and range. Johnson is a late bloomer who continues to show steady overall improvement. Considering the work ethic and progress he's displayed over the last four year, as well as the lack of available true centers, Ervin has a good shot at being a lottery pick.

2) Ed Stokes (7'0/265) Arizona — Stokes is big, athletic and possesses some very nice skills. In his first three seasons, however, he has been a considerable disappointment. He's shown flashes, but has for the most part been very inconsistent. The consensus is his intensity and enthusiasm are not at the necessary levels. He has been more consistent thus far this season, but scouts are still troubled by his occasional disappearing acts. Depending on his play in the NCAA Tournament and NBA draft camps, he could realistically go anywhere between the lottery and early second round.

3) Malcolm Mackey (6'11/250) Georgia Tech — A powerful rebounder and inside player. Mackey has limited range, though he has proven to be an effective post up scorer. His overall offensive game has not developed as most recruiters thought it would, which is probably mainly due to his surprising lack of aggressiveness when the ball is in his hands. A fourth year starter for Tech, he will finish his career as the Yellow Jackets all-time rebound leader. Malcolm will most likely be a middle first round pick.

4) Sascha Hupmann (7'1/250) Evansville — The Russian is big, strong, and mobile, runs the floor well and blocks shots. Though he must be considered a project at this point, particularly on offense, his size and potential alone should make him a first rounder.

5) Eric Riley (7'0/225) Michigan — There is no shame in losing one's starting job to the best big man in the country, as Riley did to Chris Webber entering his junior season. A few talent evaluators have forgotten about the Wolverines' sixth man, but the majority of NBA scouts know who he is. Although he's known primarily as a defensive specialist and shotblocker (swatted away 78 in 28 games as a sophomore starter), he also has a nice shooting touch inside 15 feet and is an adequate rebounder. Far from a true NBA center, Riley needs to bulk up about 20 pounds and develop a few reliable post moves. Probably a late first or early second round pick.

BEST OF THE REST: 6) Spencer Dunkley (6'11/230) Delaware, 7) Brent Scott (6'10/250) Rice, 8) Mike Peplowski (6'10/270) Michigan State, 9) Scott Haskin (6'11/240) Oregon, 10) Conrad McRae (6'10/230) Syracuse

Possible Early Entries

Eric Montross (7'0/255) North Carolina (Junior) — Has the best post moves in country. A bull inside powering to the basket and controlling the boards. Montross also has very good hands and athleticism. Owns the defensive glass and is a good outlet passer. He likes to get his nose dirty. Previously indicated he would not forsake his senior year. A definite lottery pick if he comes out early.

Luther Wright (7'2/277) Seton Hall (Junior) — He showed only flashes of what made him such a highly sought after recruit, after having sat out his freshman year as a Prop 48 casualty. Wright is limited offensively, but should be much more of a rebounding and shotblocking factor than he has been to date. Lack of conditioning and maturity are reportedly his two biggest problems. He's been more consistent this year, but you can still find him on P.J. Carlesimo's bench most times when the game is on the line. He should stay at the Hall another year, as he will likely become a go to guy next season with Terry Dehere and Jerry Walker gone, and could potentially elevate himself to the lottery with even a respectable showing. In 1993, he'd be lucky to get a call in the first round.

Yinka Dare (7'1/255) George Washington (Freshman) — Though extremely raw, some scouts believe he could eventually become the second Nigerian to make a major splash in the NBA. Dare has only been playing organized hoops

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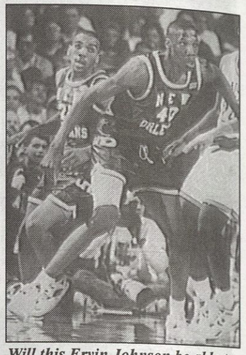


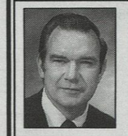
Will this Ervin Johnson be able to wield some of his own magic?

1992-93 Boston Celtics Roster

No.	Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Birthdate	College	Yrs Pro
4	Alaa Abdelnaby	F	6-10	240	6/24/68	Duke	2
5	John Bagley	G	6-0	205	4/23/60	Boston College	10
7	Dee Brown	G	6-1	161	11/29/68	Jacksonville	2
20	Sherman Douglas	G	6-1	180	9/15/66	Syracuse	3
44	Rick Fox	G-F	6-7	231	7/24/69	North Carolina	1
34	Kevin Gamble	G-F	6-5	210	11/13/65	Iowa	5
53	Joe Kleine	C	7-0	271	1/4/62	Arkansas	7
35	Reggie Lewis	G-F	6-7	195	11/21/65	Northeastern	5
31	Xavier McDaniel	F	6-7	205	6/4/63	Wichita State	7
32	Kevin McHale	F-C	6-10	225	12/19/57	Minnesota	12
00	Robert Parish	C	7 ½	230	8/30/53	Centenary	16
54	Ed Pinckney†	F	6-9	215	3/27/63	Villanova	7
41	Marcus Webb†	F-C	6-9	255	5/9/70	Alabama	R
43	Lorenzo Williams	F	6-9	200	7/15/69	Stetson	R

†Injured

Head Coach: Chris Ford
Trainer: Ed Lacerte
Asst. Coaches: Don Casey, Jon Jennings



Ed Macauley on Larry Bird:

"People like Bird, you just thank God that you were able to see them play ...I don't know what he got for grades in school, but his intelligence and instincts on the basketball court were just astounding. What can you say? The superlatives that come to mind all apply to him...being able to take a body that is not as gifted as many other players', but to be able to reach the heights he's been able to reach just through his own intelligence and his willingness to work on his game. He's truly one of the greatest players who's ever played the game of basketball and probably second only to Ed Macauley to play for the Celtics."

College Players

Continued from previous page

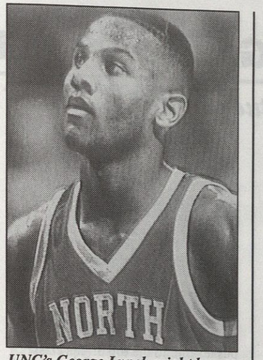
for a couple of years, but he seems enthusiastic and he definitely has the physical and athletic tools to be mentioned in the same breath as Mr. Olajuwon.

POWER FORWARDS

1) Doug Edwards (6'9/220) Florida State — Compared by some scouts to Danny Manning. A pure athlete who does it all. Edwards is a very versatile offensive performer. Has a very soft touch and a great feel for knowing how to get his shot off. He is also a very good passer and ballhandler for a big man. He is a good rebounder, particularly off the offensive glass. The only knock on him is that he sometimes appears to be coasting, especially on the defensive end. When he's playing hard, he can be a very good man-to-man defender and shotblocking presence. A lottery lock.

2) Vin Baker (6'11/215) Hartford — Another well rounded athletic type. Baker scores inside, on medium range jumpers and off the break. He dominates on the boards and blocks shots left and right. In addition, he is a good ballhandler and adept passer for a man his size. The big question scouts have is how this will translate to the NBA — a big jump, needless to say, from the NAC (North Atlantic Conference). At this point, most talent evaluators seem to think he'll be a lottery pick, but a lot may depend on how he performs in the post-season camps.

3) Kevin Thompson (6'11/250) N.C. State — Another late bloomer. Thompson really started to come into his own as a junior, and now, with Tom Gugliotta in the NBA, he's become the main man for the Wolfpack. Possesses a nice variety of offensive skills. Has respectable range and ballhandling skills for a man his size. As his 15.6 points per game last year implies, he knows where the basket is. In addition, as his ACC leading field goal rate (62 percent) implies, he doesn't force the issue. He does a decent job on the boards and defensively, but needs to play more physically. A probable lottery pick if most of the underclass big men stay put.



UNC's George Lynch might be another Dean Smith product who will perform better in the pros.

4) Acie Earl (6'10/240) Iowa — A phenomenal shotblocker. Earl is within reach of the all-time NCAA record for swat-aways. He has decent touch around the hoop and inside ten feet, but is lost any further out or if he has to put the ball to the floor. Obviously, he's a quick leaper and has good reflexes, but he is surprisingly slow up and down the floor. A good rebounder, but it seems he should be better. A likely mid first rounder.

5) George Lynch (6'8/220) North Carolina — Another one of those Dean Smith products who could turn out to be a lot better in the pros than he looked in college. Though undersized by NBA power forward standards, Lynch is a strong inside scorer and paint presence. He is perhaps the most aggressive offensive rebounder in the nation. His combination of power, athleticism and quickness allows him to get his shot off over bigger opponents. However, he will most likely have to increase his range and add a face up dimension to succeed at the next level. A mid to late first round pick.

BEST OF THE REST: 6) Corie Blount (6'10/220) Cincinnati, 7) Anthony Reed (6'9/220) Tulane, 8) Brian Hendrick (6'9/225) California, 9) Derrick Chandler (6'10/245) Nebraska, 10) Bryan Sallier (6'8/250) Oklahoma.

Possible Early Entries

Chris Webber (6'10/240) Michigan (Sophomore) — A physically dominating presence inside. Webber is blessed with awesome natural strength and athleticism. He is a monster rebounder and shotblocker. A truly frightening vision when he gets out on the wing of the break. Generally, he simply overpowers defenders to get his points, but he also has a nice shooting touch inside 15 feet and the rest of his offense is coming fast. The probable number one pick if he comes out.

Glenn Robinson (6'9/225) Purdue (Sophomore) — Extremely athletic and polished for a first year college player (a Prop 48 casualty last year). Though he lacks Webber's sheer power, he is every bit as impressive an athlete to watch and Robinson is ahead in terms of overall basketball development. He has a nice array of offensive moves, including a deadly turnaround jumper, and his first step is as quick as anyone his size in the NBA. He said in November he wouldn't be coming out this year. If he changes his his mind, he's a definite high lottery choice.

Jamal Mashburn (6'8/225) Kentucky (Junior) — A relentless and unstoppable inside player who also has range out to three-point range. He reminds me of a big cat — sleek, powerful and lightning quick. Mashburn exploded on the scene as a sophomore, and is now considered one of the best collegians in the land. He's been compared often to Karl Malone, though at this stage Jamal is further along than the Mailman was. A top five pick if he opts for the NBA this year.

This is the first of two installments previewing college prospects and the upcoming draft. In the next issue of Celtics Pride, we'll take a look at the nation's top small forwards, shooting guards and point guards. ●

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Mid-Season Grades Are In

Inconsistency Has Boston Stuck in the Middle of the Road

By Mike Spellman

At the mid-season marking period, it appears the Celtics are still a team with a lot of question marks. There have been signs indicating progress in recent months, but the Bird-less C's have for the most part been a woefully inconsistent bunch.

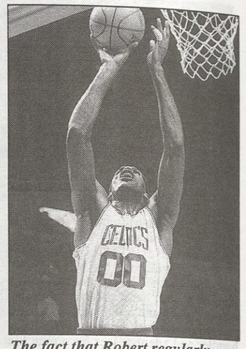
On one hand, we could concentrate on facts such as the Celtics are currently three games over .500 for the first time this season, at 24-21, and tsince getting off to their abysmal 2-8 start, they have gone 22-13.

However, looking more closely at their recent accomplishments, we see that in the last nine games the Celtics have gone 5-4 playing teams with a combined 192-203 record. If this isn't mediocrity I don't know what is.

Of course, much of their so so play can be linked to the retirement of Larry Bird and the loss of Eddie Pinckney to knee surgery after just seven games, but the bottom line is that the fans in these parts won't accept any excuse for mediocrity, and that is exactly what the 1992-93 edition of the Celtics has been to date.

As a whole, I give the team a B — through 45 games and with 37 to go. Below are the individual grades.

Robert Parish (A-) — The fact that he is still playing at all at age 39 by itself earns him a better than average grade. The fact that he is still playing nearly 30 minutes a night and putting up about 13 points and 10 boards per, while doing a solid job anchoring the all important final line defense moves him up even more. The fact that he regularly comes up with monster plays and performances when his team seems to need them the most pushes him to the top of this class.



The fact that Robert regularly comes up with monster plays and performances when his team seems to need them the most pushes him to the top of this class.

Dee Brown (B+) — A grade this high will no doubt come as a shock to a lot of you who've seen the numerous bad decisions on fast breaks and the stagnation of halfcourt offense with Dee at the helm. The key thing to bear in mind here, though, as far as I'm concerned, is where he's coming from. The feeling here is Dee has developed over the course of 45 games this season as quickly as anyone could have reasonably hoped. He is showing steady progress in all of the important areas for a point guard, a position up until this year he never played full-time. The opinion here is his critics have been too hard on him. I'll be the first one to concede that numbers never tell the whole story, but you can't ignore the fact that Dee's assist to-turnover ratio (traditionally the first stat anyone looks at to assess a point guard in league) of 3.62-1 is one of the best among NBA starting point guards, far better, in fact, than Mark Price (2.83-1) Isiah Thomas (2.63-1) Kenny Anderson (2.98-1) and Tim Hardaway (3.28-1).

Kevin Gamble (B) — Right now, Gamble is surviving quite nicely as a secondary option in the primarily halfcourt offense, knocking down his outside shot more consistently than anyone on the team, taking the ball in enough to keep defenders honest, doing his part to keep the ball moving in the motion offense Chris Ford likes to start games with and capitalizing on the rare opportunities to run. He is usually overmatched defensively against small forwards, but we've known about that for three years. The bottom line is the upside is greater than the downside. If the team could ever find a way to start running again like they did two years ago, Gamble might be this team's second leading scorer. He is clearly at his best in an up-tempo game.

Xavier McDaniel (B-) — To date, The X-man has come pretty much as advertised. He's the team's second leading scorer (13.5 ppg) and rebounder (5.7 rpg). He's played hard and physical. After an up and down start, X seems to have found a niche coming off the bench. Kevin Gamble, who replaced McDaniel in the starting lineup, is better suited than X to the passing and motion-offense Chris Ford likes to establish at the beginning of games. And now McDaniel, never much of a kick it out guy anyway, has been given more freedom by the coach than he had as a starter to look to create his own offense. Of late, X has proven very effective in the halfcourt isolations, particularly in backing his man down and then pulling back for the medium range jumpers. Still, I'd like to see him look to slash to the basket a little bit more than he has.

Reggie Lewis (B-) — If you understand that last season's performances during the stretch run and playoffs deserved an A, you should have no problem understanding why Reggie gets only a B — for what he's done thus far

Continued on following page

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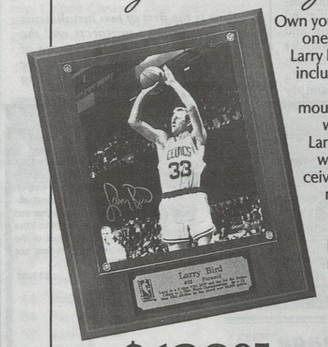

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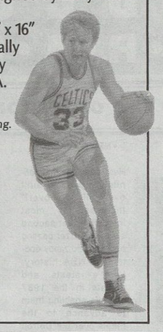

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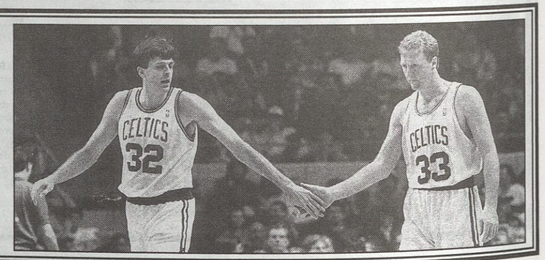
Larry Bird on Larry Bird:

"I've been blessed over the years. I played with some of the greatest players ever to play. I'm going to miss playing for the Boston Celtics because I was very proud to play for the Boston Celtics. I never put on my uniform to play a game. I put it on to win."



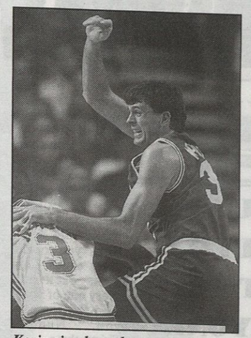
Report Card

Continued from previous page

in 1992-'93. Sorry Reg, but that's what happens when you establish yourself as a superstar caliber talent. His 20.7 points per game average is about the same as last year's mark (20.8 ppg), but his shooting percentage of .468 is well below last season's career high of .503. Naturally, the numbers don't tell the whole story, but one only has to watch Reggie to know he is not the same player he was at the tale end of last season. There are, of course, a number of legitimate explanations for this — the implications of Larry's retirement on the whole team, the new burden of leadership and the nagging quadricep injuries he's been plagued with for most of the season. To his credit, he is downplaying all these things and just saying repeatedly that he and his teammates just have to get the job done. I concur, but for Reggie making this observation he deserves a slight knock up from the C+ I originally assigned.

Joe Kleine (C+) — As always Joe gets and A+ for effort and hustle. He is averaging nearly a rebound every three minutes, so he is getting the job done there, and he continues to give 100 percent every time he's on the floor. However, this year to date it would be impossible to explain giving him anything above the grade you see above for his production. The biggest complaint is that his outside shot has deserted him. He is playing 15 minutes a night and only shooting .385 from the floor, and that has clearly hurt the team. Although his offense contributions to the team are not nearly as important as his work on the boards and defense, his teammates need him to hit those medium range shots when he's on the floor to open up things for them.

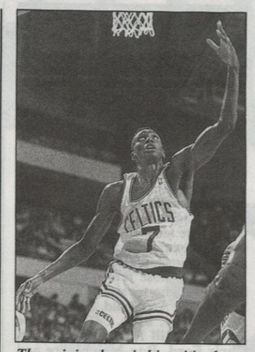
Kevin McHale (C-) — He has been relatively healthy (or at least as healthy as we can ever expect to see him again), so that can not be used as an excuse. We're past the mid-season point, so we've got to believe that what we've seen so far is about as good as we're going to see. We must also acknowledge that he will never again be much more than an offensive role player. Bearing that in mind, the lion's share of his evaluation will be determined by his production at this end of the floor. He's had a few big games and been a key contributor in crunchtime in several of the Celtics' wins (such as scoring the final seven points in regulation against Orlando). Overall, however, through 44 games, he is averaging 25.4 minutes and 12.3 points on .459 shooting. His most reliable move is now the baseline half hook, and his game has gravitated more and more towards the perimeter, as he simply no longer possesses the quickness or mobility to squeeze by his man like he used to.



Kevin simply no longer possesses the quickness or mobility to squeeze by his man like he used to.

Rick Fox (C-) — Entering the season with the logjam at the small forward and shooting guard positions, it was pretty much presumed by all that someone would eventually become the odd man out. It appears rather obvious that the pressure of this situation got to Fox more than those he was competing against for minutes. His play for most of the early part of the season was spotty at best, particularly at the offensive end, where those cute little moves that worked so effectively in his rookie season suddenly seemed easily defensible. Subsequently, it did not come as too great a surprise when Ford gradually began to cut back on his time and even when he never got off the bench at all in two games. As only a second year player, it wouldn't really be fair to condemn Fox for not responding as well as the veterans (McDaniel, Gamble) he was up against. One thing no one can accuse him of is not trying hard enough. In fact, it is possible he was trying too hard. Fortunately, the sophomore seems to have settled into a comfort zone in recent weeks and his minutes are gradually on the rise again.

Sherman Douglas (D) — First off, there are two things that seem pretty evident: 1) Dee Brown is going to be The Man at the point for some time to come, 2) Sherman Douglas is never going to really accept a bit role. Since being traded from Miami for Brian Shaw last January, Sherm has been unable to fit in, and at this point it has to be said that it seems highly unlikely he ever will. It was hoped a fresh start this season would turn it around for him, but so far the situation has gone from bad to worse. He began the season as the starting point guard, but Ford returned him to the bench after just nine games when he showed little ability to run a halfcourt offense. Douglas has turned in a handful of positive performances since then, but for the most part the team has lost ground when he's come in for Brown. And now that John Bagley, re-signed by the team on December 23, seems to have gotten himself into game shape, the word is Douglas could soon find himself out of the rotation all together. Obviously, management would trade Douglas for just about any offer right now, but, as we all know, his high price tag (an average of $2.5 million through the '97-98 season) coupled with the growing perception he has too many weaknesses (poor shooter, marginal athlete), makes that seem highly improbable.



The opinion here is his critics have been too hard on Dee Brown.

Alaa Abdelnaby (D) — There's no denying the kid has got some tools, but it's starting to become much less of a mystery why the people in Portland and Milwaukee were willing to give up on him as quickly as they did. The monster games he had shortly after his December arrival are today almost as disturbing as they were then encouraging, because they are serving as a reminder of how good the kid should be. Physically, he seems to have all the essentials to be a rock solid NBA power forward. So the most logical conclusion one can come to watching him not get the job done on the boards or at the defensive end is that there is something not quite right in his mental approach to the game.

INCOMPLETES — Marcus Webb, John Bagley, Ed Pinckney and Lorenzo Williams haven't yet had enough opportunities this season to be evaluated fairly. ●

BOSTON CELTICS TEAM STATISTICS

AS OF 2/1/93

PLAYER	G	MIN	FG	FGA	FG%	FT	FTA	FT%	3FG	3FGA	ORB	REB	AST	STL	TO	BLK	PF	PTS	PPG
Lewis	45	1738	378	601	.472	179	204	.877	4	26	41	184	171	72	74	41	145	939	20.9
McDaniel	45	1247	260	622	.498	79	100	.790	0	6	92	257	91	42	87	33	145	599	13.3
Parish	45	1186	228	435	.524	99	139	.712	0	0	145	429	36	30	69	65	112	555	12.3
Brown	45	1387	207	430	.481	124	155	.800	15	50	27	165	312	78	87	18	120	583	12.3
McHale	43	1089	207	450	.460	113	134	.843	2	12	60	231	45	9	81	40	86	529	12.3
Gamble	45	1218	207	409	.506	58	69	.841	22	53	25	120	103	38	41	21	101	494	11.0
Fox	43	736	122	265	.480	51	83	.510	4	18	32	103	75	39	50	14	95	299	7.0
Abdelnaby	38	591	95	201	.473	54	68	.794	0	1	61	133	15	11	45	8	63	244	6.4
Douglas	42	813	99	221	.448	33	64	.516	4	15	25	65	203	23	68	3	81	235	5.6
Pinckney	7	151	10	24	.417	12	13	.923	0	0	14	43	1	4	8	7	13	32	4.6
Webb	9	51	13	25	.520	13	21	.619	0	1	5	10	2	1	5	2	11	39	4.3
Kleine	44	658	62	161	.385	28	37	.757	0	4	78	214	24	10	24	9	72	152	3.5
Bagley	6	58	7	15	.487	3	4	.750	0	0	1	1	10	2	9	0	7	17	2.8
Williams	12	87	8	18	.375	1	2	.500	0	0	13	35	1	2	4	10	11	13	1.1

CONFIDENTIAL

A Much-Needed Night for Everyone

By Bob Schron

BIRD NIGHT A BEACON. The spectacular success of the Celtics' night in honor of Larry Bird, highlighted by the team retiring Bird's number, was a fitting tribute to this great star.

In this season of transition in Boston, fandom needed to remember how much Bird gave to the team, both in talent and in spirit.

Three championship years were celebrated from the Bird Era — the 1981, 1984 and 1986 championship teams were reunited to salute a player who was extraordinary in talent, will and commitment to the Celtics.

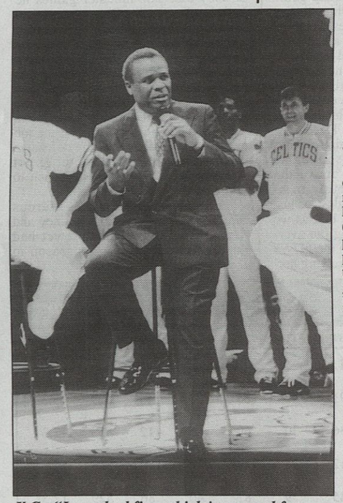
Among those returning: **Cedric Maxwell** (who received the biggest hand), **Tiny Archibald, Bill Walton, Rick Robey, Rick Carlisle, Eric Fernsten, Bill Fitch, K.C. Jones, Chris Ford, Ray Melchiorre** and **Quinn Buckner.** There were more, and the most imposing "opponent" and most impressive perhaps was **Magic Johnson.** In the two and a half hour event hosted by **Bob Costas,** the highlight of the night was when Bird and Magic engaged in roughly a fifteen minute dialogue, helped along by the masterful Costas. Magic's words to Bird, among many, were, "You lied — you've said that somewhere in America there is a young 'Larry Bird' already getting ready to star in basketball. But you're wrong. There will never, never, never, never, *ever* be another Larry Bird. You can take that to the bank.

"One thing I'll say about Larry — he was the one player I feared. Because if there was less than a half-second left in a game, you knew that man would find a way to win that damn game...I love you, I respect you, I admire you," Magic continued, serenading his friend.

Red Auerbach joined Costas at the end and commented, "I've heard all the raves about Larry as a player, but what everyone seemed to miss was how special Larry is as a man. He's a great friend and he's always doing important charitable things for special causes and for friends, things few ever hear about. The only regret I have is that I never coached him." Red Auerbach went on to reflect on the sometimes painful negotiations: "Larry's agent (**Bob Woolf**) wanted to build incentives into his contract, a particular bonus if he made the All-Rookie Team, etc. Here we are in the middle of these difficult negotiations, and I'm ready to pay Larry the highest amount of money (believed to be $650,000 per season in 1979) ever paid to a player entering the league...and he's not going to make the All-Rookie Team!?! What did I look like, nuts?

"But on a serious note, I'm proud to call Larry a friend."

Bird, once again dressed in his Celtic warmup suit, addressed the crowd at the end. "I gave it everything I had for thirteen years, and it was for the greatest organization in the world, and it was for you fans. Think about it — I had you folks cheering, 'Larrr-eee!' and I was playing down here on the parquet for the greatest team in history. Don't you think that would make a fellow proud? But tonight I'm officially through playing basketball, and I thank you for the great times. God bless each and every one of you." And the same to you, Number Thirty-three.



K.C.: "Larry had fire, which is unusual for most superstars."

• • • • •

NOTES: The Captain, **Reggie Lewis** was wavering about the status of the team, though it had won twelve of sixteen. The dilemma: a five game western trip over ten days, including Texas (**Hakeem Olajuwon** and **David Robinson**) and Phoenix, with **Charles Barkley** the leading favorite to win the title at All-Star break time. "We need to be more aggressive, but especially on the defensive end," Lewis said after the team had struggled to wins over Philadelphia and Golden State the first weekend of February. "Everyone talks about this team needing to establish an identity, but it's probably true.

"We have a very important test coming up on the road, and it's critical that we get off to a good start — both on the trip and as a whole when we open up in Dallas and in each and every game.

"When we fall behind, it seems to set up a self-defeating cycle. We keep waiting for the next thing to go wrong. We need to get off well, and to take it one game at a time."... Lewis on the Golden State "attack," in truth a slowdown attack in the absence of **Chris Mullin,** who broke his thumb before the teams met in the Garden Feb. 7. "I played forty-eight minutes and it was the first time in a basketball game I didn't break a sweat. The only thing I accomplished out there was that I caught a cold."... **Don Nelson,** who devised the strategy against Boston, said he "hated" to use it and would "rarely" use it again. After the C's 87-82 win in that game, **Dave Gavitt** released a statement on press row condemning the approach and urging the NBA Competition Committee to alter the "antiquated" zone defense rule. Gavitt made these statements in *Celtics Pride* in 1990, his first season as Exec-VP of the team.

Robert Parish moved into 2nd place on the All-Time Games Played list and offered some supportive words about former teammate Maxwell: "His number should be retired," Parish said. "He was directly responsible for us winning two championships here with Larry (1981 and 1984). It was good to see him back here and getting along well with everybody (on the Celtics). Some harsh things may have been said in the past, but I think both sides should be adult enough to make up and let it go." ●

1992-93 Boston Celtics Schedule

February 1993

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5 PHI	6
7 GS	8	9* MIL	10	11	12 DAL	13 SAN
14	15	16 PHO	17	18 HOU	19	20
21	22	23 IND	24 NJ	25	26 ATL	27
28 POR						

March 1993

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 DET	2	3 SAN	4	5 DET	6
7 CLE	8	9	10 PHI	11	12 MIL	13
14 CHA	15	16 GS	17	18 DEN	19 LAL	20
21 POR	22	23	24 MIA	25	26 DAL	27
28* WAS	29 SAC	30	31 PHI			

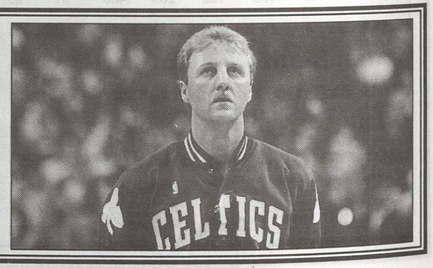
April 1993

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2 PHO	3
4 CHI	5	6	7	8 NY	9 DET	10
11 NY	12	13 IND	14	15 NJ	16	17 MIA
18 ORL	19	20	21 ORL	22	23 CLE	24
25 WAS	26	27	28	29	30	

Home games are shaded. * Denotes a home game in Hartford, CT. All games on WEEI (590 AM) Radio. All times are local times, and all are PM.

Frank Ramsey on Larry Bird:

"Phenomenal. I can't think of any other word that would describe him...We both came from Midwestern small towns — you might say we're from the blue-collar area of the country — and he certainly played like that. You very rarely heard or saw him complain. He went out night after night and gave a complete effort and I think he maintained his Midwestern personality."



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GAME BY GAME

IN SEARCH OF CONSISTENCY

DETROIT 103
BOSTON 94
JANUARY 27, 1993
THE PALACE

Terry Mills scored 21 of of his 25 points in the second half to help the Pistons break their six-game losing streak. The Pistons also broke a dubious mark by winning for the the first time in 11 games without Dennis Rodman. The Celtics led 47-44 at the half, but Detroit started the third quarter with a 24-9 that included 11 points by Mills. Kevin Gamble scored 11 of his 13 points in the quarter to keep the Celts close, but it wasn't enough. Reggie Lewis led the C's with 22 points and Robert Parish was forced to leave the game after three minutes due to a strained back.

BOSTON

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Abdelnaby	20	3-4	0-0	1-3	1	5	4
Gamble	28	4-8	5-6	0-2	3	1	13
Parish	3	0-0	0-2	0-0	0	0	0
Lewis	43	10-16	2-3	0-3	2	4	22
Brown	32	3-9	4-4	0-4	7	3	10
Kleine	24	2-3	0-0	1-6	1	2	4
McHale	30	5-13	5-6	3-8	0	1	15
Fox	17	1-2	3-4	0-1	0	2	5
McDaniel	27	8-17	1-4	3-8	2	4	17
Douglas	16	1-1	0-0	0-0	4	2	2
TOTALS	**240**	**37-73**	**20-29**	**8-35**	**20**	**24**	**94**

FG% .507; FT% .690; Three-point goals 0-4, .000 (Gamble 0-1, McDaniel 0-1, Brown 0-2); Team Rebounds: 14; Blocked: 1 (McDaniel 1); Turnovers: 13 (Douglas 3, Abdelnaby 2, Brown 2, Fox 2, McDaniel 2, Kleine 1, Lewis 1); Steals: 2 (Douglas 1, McDaniel 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: None.

DETROIT

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Woolridge	11	1-7	2-2	0-1	0	1	4
Glass	35	6-9	0-0	0-4	1	4	12
Laimbeer	31	1-7	0-0	3-9	0	4	2
Dumars	42	7-19	2-4	1-3	6	2	16
Thomas	38	8-15	5-6	1-3	13	4	22
Mills	28	9-20	7-7	9-14	0	3	25
Polynice	23	3-5	1-2	4-9	0	3	7
Young	13	0-1	0-0	0-0	2	1	0
Aguirre	19	6-10	3-3	1-3	2	1	15
TOTALS	**240**	**41-93**	**20-24**	**19-46**	**24**	**23**	**103**

FG% .441; FT% .833; Three-point goals 1-8, .125 (Thomas 1-2, Woolridge 0-1, Young 0-1, Aguirre 0-2, Dumars 0-2); Team Rebounds: 6; Blocked: 1 (Laimbeer 1); Turnovers: 6 (Aguirre 1, Dumars 1, Glass 1, Laimbeer 1, Thomas 1, Team 1); Steals: 7 (Glass 4, Laimbeer 1, Mills 1, Young 1); Technical fouls: 1; Illegal Defense: None.

DETROIT	**21**	**23**	**33**	**26**	**103**
Boston	**25**	**22**	**24**	**23**	**94**

BOSTON 116
ORLANDO 105
JANUARY 29, 1993
ORLANDO ARENA

The Celtics first trip to "The House That Shaq Built" was a memorable one. Despite Shaquille O'Neal's 26 points on 10-of-13 shooting, the Celts were able to overcome a 10-point deficit at the half and force the overtime victory. Reggie Lewis scored 28 points and Dee Brown added 25 to help the Celts make up for a slow start. The Celtics' defense made the difference in the game, forcing 22 Magic turnovers.

BOSTON

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Gamble	35	5-14	0-0	4-7	1	2	10
Williams	8	1-1	0-0	0-1	0	1	2
Parish	27	9-16	0-0	6-10	0	5	18
Brown	41	9-15	7-9	0-6	9	3	25
Lewis	50	11-23	6-6	0-4	6	2	28
Abdelnaby	9	1-2	0-0	2-3	0	0	2
Kleine	15	0-3	1-2	3-3	0	2	1
McHale	28	4-11	3-3	1-6	1	2	11
McDaniel	30	5-10	1-2	1-2	3	6	11
Fox	10	2-2	0-0	0-0	1	2	4
Douglas	12	2-3	0-0	0-1	3	1	4
TOTALS	**265**	**49-100**	**18-22**	**17-43**	**24**	**26**	**116**

FG% .490; FT% .818; Three-point goals 0-2, .000 (Gamble 0-2); Team Rebounds: 8; Blocked: 7 (McDaniel 3, Lewis 1, McHale 1, Parish 1, Williams 1); Turnovers: 12 (McDaniel 3, Abdelnaby 2, Lewis 2, McHale 2, Fox 1, Gamble 1, Parish 1); Steals: 13 (Brown 5, Lewis 3, Fox 1, Gamble 1, McDaniel 1, Parish 1, Williams 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: 1.

ORLANDO

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Bowie	36	6-12	0-0	0-3	3	2	13
Tolbert	22	4-6	0-0	1-5	0	0	8
O'Neal	40	10-13	6-7	3-13	2	6	26
Skiles	46	3-11	8-8	2-5	9	6	16
Anderson	51	6-22	8-12	3-9	2	3	21
Royal	32	4-11	8-11	1-3	0	2	16
Turner	15	2-4	0-0	0-2	2	2	4
Kite	10	0-0	1-1	1-2	0	1	1
Catledge	6	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Green	6	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Kerr	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
TOTALS	**265**	**36-79**	**31-39**	**11-42**	**18**	**24**	**105**

FG% .456; FT% .795; Three-point goals 2-11, .182 (Bowie 1-2, Anderson 1-4, Tolbert 0-1, Turner 0-1, Skiles 0-3); Team Rebounds: 13; Blocked: 2 (O'Neal 2); Turnovers: 22 (Skiles 7, O'Neal 6, Anderson 3, Tolbert 2, Turner 2, Bowie 1, Royal 1); Steals: 6 (Anderson 2, Skiles 2, Tolbert 2); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: 1.

BOSTON	**22**	**24**	**29**	**24**	**17**	**116**
Orlando	**28**	**28**	**22**	**21**	**6**	**105**

L.A. LAKERS 96
BOSTON 87
JANUARY 31, 1993
BOSTON GARDEN

This rivalry did not live up to its storied past, as both teams played sloppy basketball. Unfortunately for the Celtics, they played worse and found themselves on the short end of the stick. Rookie Anthony Peeler scored 16 points, and backcourt-mate Sedale Threatt added 16 to help lead the Lakers to the victory. The Celtics led 31-25 after the first quarter thanks to Kevin Gamble's nine points, Gamble's total for the game. Boston managed just 56 points over the final three quarters, and rookie free agent, Lorenzo Williams grabbed a career-high 11 rebounds.

BOSTON

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Gamble	21	4-9	0-0	0-1	4	0	9
Williams	18	1-3	0-0	4-11	0	1	2
Parish	28	3-7	1-2	1-5	1	2	7
Brown	35	7-14	2-2	1-3	8	1	17
Lewis	40	9-24	5-6	0-2	6	5	23
McHale	31	5-11	4-4	0-6	0	2	14
Kleine	19	2-4	0-0	0-9	1	2	4
Fox	8	1-2	0-0	0-1	0	1	2
Douglas	7	0-2	0-0	0-0	2	2	0
McDaniel	28	4-7	1-2	1-1	1	3	9
Bagley	6	0-3	0-0	0-0	2	3	0
TOTALS	**240**	**36-86**	**13-16**	**7-39**	**25**	**22**	**87**

FG% .419; FT% .813; Three-point goals 2-9, .222 (Gamble 1-2, Brown 1-3, Kleine 0-1, Lewis 0-3); Team Rebounds: 7; Blocked: 3 (McHale 2, Parish 1); Turnovers: 9 (Gamble 2, Lewis 2, Douglas 1, McDaniel 1, McHale 1, Parish 1, Williams 1); Steals: 4 (Kleine 1, Lewis 1, McHale 1, Parish 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: None.

L.A. LAKERS

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Worthy	28	3-15	4-4	0-5	4	1	10
Green	39	7-12	12	6-12	1	2	15
Perkins	36	4-11	0-0	1-4	3	3	8
Peeler	32	7-11	1-6	1-5	4	3	16
Threatt	40	7-12	2-2	1-6	7	2	16
Divac	26	4-11	5-8	3-10	2	3	13
Smith	16	2-4	1-2	2-4	1	1	5
Cooper	8	2-2	0-0	0-1	1	1	5
Edwards	10	3-4	0-0	0-1	0	1	6
Campbell	5	1-4	0-0	0-2	0	0	2
TOTALS	**240**	**39-97**	**19-24**	**10-41**	**22**	**27**	**101**

FG% .465; FT% .583; Three-point goals 2-3, .667 (Cooper 1-1, Peeler 1-1, Divac 0-1); Team Rebounds: 13; Blocked: 3 (Divac 2, Perkins 1); Turnovers: 10 (Divac 3, Green 2, Threatt 2, Peeler 1, Smith 1, Worthy 1); Steals: 5 (Peeler 2, Perkins 2, Divac 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: 1.

L.A. LAKERS	**25**	**29**	**24**	**18**	**96**
Boston	**31**	**18**	**19**	**19**	**87**

BOSTON 105
PHILADELPHIA 93
FEBRUARY 5, 1993
BOSTON GARDEN

After leading by 17 points, the Celtics saw their lead dwindle to just 5 points before using a 32 point fourth quarter to help break away from the Sixers. Reggie Lewis led Boston with 28 points.

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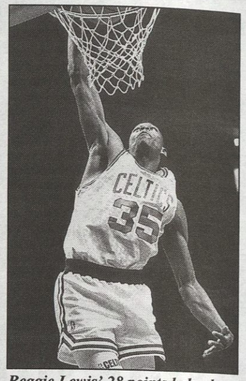

Reggie Lewis' 28 points helped the Celts to a come-from-behind victory in Orlando.

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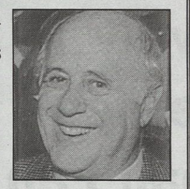

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Game Reviews

Continued from previous page

Robert Parish chipped in with 18 points and 14 rebounds and Xavier McDaniel added 16 off the bench. Hersey Hawkins led the Sixers with 19 points.

BOSTON

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Gamble	21	5-11	0-0	0-2	0	3	10
Williams	19	1-5	0-0	2-6	1	1	2
Parish	37	7-12	4-4	3-15	3	4	18
Brown	37	5-9	4-4	3-4	12	4	15
Lewis	41	14-22	0-0	1-2	6	2	28
McDaniel	28	7-15	2-2	1-4	3	2	16
Kleine	7	0-1	2-2	1-3	0	1	2
McHale	26	4-9	0-2	0-7	0	3	8
Douglas	11	1-2	0-0	0-0	3	1	2
Fox	9	2-3	0-0	0-0	3	1	4
Abdelnaby	4	0-0	0-0	0-2	0	0	0
TOTALS	**240**	**46-89**	**12-14**	**11-44**	**31**	**22**	**105**

FG% .517; FT% .857; Three-point goals 1-4, .250 (Brown 1-1, Gamble 0-1, Kleine 0-1, McDaniel 0-1); Team Rebounds: 9; Blocked: 9 (Gamble 2, McDaniel 2, Williams 2, Fox 1, Lewis 1, Parish 1); Turnovers: 18 (Lewis 7, Brown 4, McHale 2, Parish 2, Abdelnaby 1, Douglas 1, McDaniel 1); Steals: 16 (McDaniel 4, Brown 3, Lewis 3, Gamble 2, Douglas 1, Kleine 1, McHale 1, Parish 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: None.

PHILADELPHIA

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Perry	15	1-2	0-0	3-3	3	1	2
Weatherspoon	32	6-17	3-3	0-0	2	2	15
Bol	12	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Hornacek	33	2-7	4-4	1-5	8	4	8
Hawkins	36	7-15	2-3	0-4	1	2	19
Lang	33	3-7	5-5	2-8	0	2	11
Dawkins	26	6-12	3-4	1-3	4	0	15
Gilliam	25	4-13	5-6	1-8	0	1	13
Anderson	19	3-7	2-2	2-5	4	2	8
Grant	6	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Shackleford	3	1-2	0-0	2-2	0	0	2
TOTALS	**240**	**33-83**	**24-27**	**11-38**	**23**	**14**	**93**

FG% .398; FT% .889; Three-point goals 3-6, .500 (Hawkins 3-4, Anderson 0-1, Hornacek 0-1); Team Rebounds: 7; Blocked: 7 (Lang 4, Bol 3); Turnovers: 19 (Dawkins 5, Hawkins 3, Hornacek 3, Perry 3,Anderson 1, Bol 1, Gilliam 1, Shackleford 1, Weatherspoon 1); Steals: 12 (Hawkins 4, Anderson 2, Dawkins 2, Bol 1, Hornacek 1, Lang 1, Perry 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: None.

BOSTON	**30**	**21**	**22**	**32**	**105**
Philadelphia	**23**	**22**	**23**	**25**	**93**

BOSTON 87
GOLDEN STATE 82
FEBRUARY 7, 1993
BOSTON GARDEN

The Warriors, with an injury-depleted roster, went to a slow-down offensive game plan looking to get the Celtics out of their offensive rhythm. It almost worked, but the Celts' depth off the bench came through for the victory. With Rick Fox and Kevin McHale each scoring 11 points, the Celtics' bench outscored the Warriors' bench 26-5. Kevin Gamble led all Celtic scorers with 20 points. Jeff Grayer and Tim Hardaway led the Warriors with 20 points each.

BOSTON

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Gamble	45	6-13	7-8	0-4	3	4	20
Williams	6	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	1	0
Parish	27	6-13	1-1	4-8	4	1	13
Brown	33	3-5	3-4	1-6	3	5	9
Lewis	48	8-18	3-4	1-5	5	3	19
Fox	24	5-9	1-2	1-6	2	3	11
McHale	21	5-10	1-1	2-5	0	1	11
Bagley	15	1-3	0-0	1-1	1	1	2
McDaniel	21	1-7	0-0	2-6	1	2	2
TOTALS	**240**	**35-78**	**16-20**	**12-42**	**19**	**21**	**87**

FG% .449; FT% .800; Three-point goals 1-3, .333 (Gamble 1-2, Lewis 0-1); Team Rebounds: 6; Blocked: 8 (Fox 2, McHale 2, Parish 2, Lewis 1, Williams 1); Turnovers: 12 (Gamble 3, Parish 3, Fox 2, Bagley 1, Brown 1, McDaniel 1, McHale 1); Steals: 6 (Gamble 2, Bagley 1, Fox 1, Lewis 1, McDaniel 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: None.

GOLDEN STATE

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Sprewell	48	6-12	3-6	1-5	2	2	18
Grayer	47	9-15	2-2	3-6	1	5	20
Hill	20	0-4	0-0	1-6	0	5	0
Hardaway	47	8-19	4-5	0-7	10	2	20
Marciulionis	48	7-13	5-6	3-9	2	3	19
Alexander	23	1-4	3-4	1-5	0	4	5
Houston	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Buechler	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Gatling	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Nealy	1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
TOTALS	**240**	**31-69**	**17-23**	**9-38**	**15**	**22**	**82**

FG% .449; FT% .739; Three-point goals 3-8, .375 (Sprewell 3-5, Hardaway 0-3); Team Rebounds: 5; Blocked: 3 (Sprewell 3, Alexander 2); Turnovers: 12 (Hardaway 5, Sprewell 3, Grayer 2, Hill 1, Marciulionis 1); Steals: 7 (Sprewell 3, Hardaway 2, Grayer 1, Marciulionis 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: 1.

BOSTON	**21**	**22**	**20**	**24**	**87**
Golden State	**20**	**22**	**18**	**22**	**82**

BOSTON 104
MILWAUKEE 92
FEBRUARY 9, 1993
HARTFORD CIVIC CENTER

Reggie Lewis and Xavier McDaniel scored 20 points apiece and Boston outrebounded Milwaukee, 48-26, en route to a rather easy win at the Celtics' home-away-from-home, the Hartford Civic Center. Alaa Abdelnaby had one of his most impressive performances as a Celtic, scoring 12 points and pulling down 11 rebounds. Six Celtics scored in double figures while Todd Day led the way for the Bucks with a career-high 29 points.

BOSTON

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Gamble	35	6-13	0-0	0-2	4	2	12
Williams	9	1-3	0-0	1-2	0	2	12
Parish	31	5-6	2-3	2-10	2	0	12
Brown	23	1-5	0-0	0-2	6	2	2
Lewis	39	6-11	8-8	0-2	4	2	20
Abdelnaby	19	5-6	2-2	2-11	0	0	12
Kleine	8	1-2	0-0	1-3	1	2	2
McDaniel	22	4-6	12-14	4-5	1	3	20
Douglas	25	3-5	1-4	2-5	6	2	7
Fox	14	1-6	2-2	0-1	1	0	4
McHale	15	5-7	1-2	1-5	1	3	11
TOTALS	**240**	**38-70**	**28-35**	**13-48**	**26**	**18**	**104**

FG% .543; FT% .800; Three-point goals 0-3, .000 (Douglas 0-1, Gamble 0-1, Kleine 0-1); Team Rebounds: 6; Blocked: 4 (Lewis 2, Abdelnaby 1, Williams 1); Turnovers: 19 (Parish 4, Brown 3, Lewis 3, McHale 3, Abdelnaby 2, Douglas 2, Gamble 1, McDaniel 1); Steals: 8 (Brown 2, Gamble 2, Lewis 2, Fox 1, Parish 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: None.

MILWAUKEE

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Avent	33	2-8	1-2	1-4	1	3	5
Edwards	31	5-10	0-0	0-3	3	3	10
Brickowski	40	10-18	2-2	2-6	3	5	22
Murdock	32	5-9	2-4	1-3	10	6	12
Day	37	13-18	0-0	1-4	2	4	29
Mayberry	16	2-5	0-0	1-1	4	1	4
Robertson	11	0-1	0-2	0-0	1	2	0
Roberts	17	1-5	0-0	0-2	2	0	2
Lohaus	9	4-7	0-0	1-1	2	3	8
Schayes	14	0-2	0-0	0-2	0	2	0
TOTALS	**240**	**42-83**	**5-10**	**7-26**	**28**	**29**	**92**

FG% .506; FT% .500; Three-point goals 3-9, .333 (Day 3-5, Edwards 0-1, Lohaus 0-1, Mayberry 0-1, Murdock 0-1); Team Rebounds: 5; Blocked: 4 (Avent 1, Day 1, Edwards 1, Lohaus 1); Turnovers: 14 (Day 4, Brickowski 2, Murdock 2, Roberts 2, Avent 1, Edwards 1, Lohaus 1, Robertson 1); Steals: 9 (Brickowski 3, Day 2, Edwards 1, Murdock 1, Roberts 1, Schayes 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: None.

BOSTON	**28**	**26**	**18**	**32**	**104**
Milwaukee	**29**	**24**	**17**	**22**	**92**

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TIME OUT FOR TRIVIA

We look back at the incomparable career of Larry Bird.

1. In which years did Larry lead the Celtics to World Championships?
2. In his 13 years with the Celtics how many Atlantic Division titles did the Celtics win?
3. In the seventh game of the '88 playoff series against Atlanta, Larry and Dominique Wilkins put on a scoring clinic in the fourth quarter. Can you remember how many points they each scored in that quarter?
4. How close can you come to the medical description of the injury that forced Bird's retirement?
5. What is Larry's best for scoring in a single game, and who did he do it against?
6. Where did the Celtics have their annual rookie camp in 1979, when he began his career as a Celtic?
7. Larry had the ability to recall details with amazing accuracy. Can you remember the nickname that Bill Fitch gave him for that ability?
8. Which member of the Denver Rockets caused Larry's broken nose during the '87-88 season?
9. In which season did Larry have his best scoring average, with 29.9, missing 30 by just 5 points?
10. Bird's first exhibition game was at Madison Square Garden. Can you remember the team and superstar he played that first game against?
11. Who did Larry room with on the road in his first season with the Celtics?
12. How many Olympic games did Larry play in, and what was his scoring average in those games?
13. Larry gave us one last reminder of his brilliant career late last season against the Trailblazers at the Garden. Can you remember the details of his performance that day?
14. Which two Universities did he attend?
15. In his senior year, Larry took his team to the NCAA championship game, losing to Magic Johnson and Michigan State. Can you name any of the four teams they beat in the tournament to get to the final?
16. Larry was only one of three Celtics to win the Rookie of the Year Award. Can you name the other two?
17. Larry was selected to the All-Star game in his rookie season. Can you remember his accomplishment in that game?
18. Larry's high for rebounds in a game was accomplished four times in his career. How many is it?
19. In which two years was Larry selected as both the regular season MVP and playoff MVP?
20. Larry's playoff scoring high is 43, in 1985. Can you remember the team he did it against?
21. Larry is fourth in career free throw percentage. Can you name the three ahead of him?
22. At the time, in 1990, Larry Bird had the second longest consecutive free throw streak in NBA history. Can you remember how many he made in a row before the streak was ended on Feb. 13?
23. What is his birthday?
24. How many points did he score during the regular season in his career?
25. Can you name the hotel/restaurant he owns in Terre Haute, Indiana?
26. On November 11, 1987, Larry achieved something no other Celtic had ever achieved. Can you remember what that was?
27. Of all the awards and accolades Larry Bird has received over his career, he has only been named the All-Star game MVP once. Can you name the year?
28. Which is higher, Larry's regular season scoring average or playoff scoring average?
29. What is his shoe size?
30. Larry's almost 9,000 career rebounds places him where on the Celtics all-time list? Who is ahead of him?

Answers: 1. 1981, '84 & '86. 2. Ten titles. 3. Larry had 20, Dominique 16. 4. A compressed cervicle of the fourth vertebra, which fractured, MA. 7. Rookie. 8. Blair Hanhassen. 9. 87-88. 10. The Celts with Julius Erving. 11. Rick Robey. 12. 8 games, 8.4 average. 16-21 from the floor. 13. Triple double, 49 points, 14 rebounds, 12 assists. 14. Indiana University, then Indiana State. 15. Virginia, Georgetown, Kansas & Syracuse. 16. Tom Heinsohn & Dave Cowens. 17. He hit the first 3-pointer in the history of the All-Star game. 18. 21. 19. 1984 & 1986. 20. The Detroit Pistons. 21. Rick Barry, Calvin Murphy & Bill Sharman. 22. 71. 23. 12/7/56. 24. 21,791. 25. Larry Bird's Boston Connection. 26. He scored 40 points and grabbed 20 rebounds. 27. 1982. 28. Regular season, by about .5 points/game. 29. 13 1/2. 30. He is fourth, with Russell, Cowens & Parish ahead of him.

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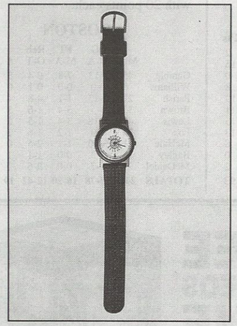

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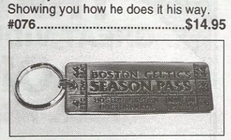
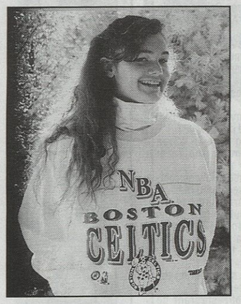
His very own 100% cotton black t-shirt. Showing you how he does it his way.
#076.....$14.95

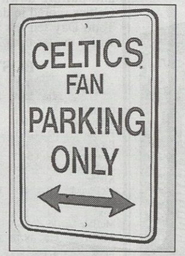


HOT TICKET Key Ring
Get your Celtic season pass here! Sold out in the Garden, but available for you in a solid brass rectangular ticket replica.
#18.....$7.95

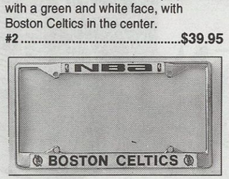


Sweatshirt
Heavy, heavyweight for the look of the 90's. This sweatshirt is white and gray with your favorite team screened on the front.
#285.....$49.95

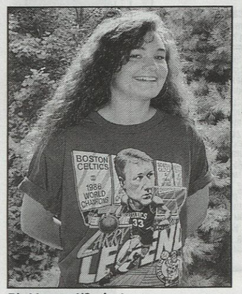
Pens
Put your team loyalty in writing with this great three-pak rollerball pen set.
#244.....$5.95



Parking Sign
Show off your team loyalty with this 12"x18" heavy duty gauge styrene fan parking sign.
#4.....$14.95

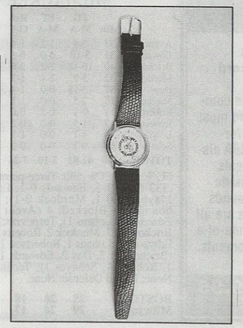


License Plate Frame
This heavy duty silver metal frame with Boston Celtics and NBA in green.
#64.....$10.95

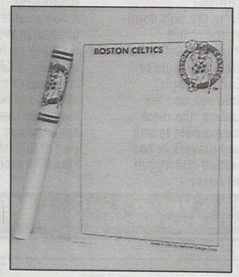


Bird Legend/Caricature
100% cotton green t-shirt for Larry. Brightly screened with World Championship banners in the background.
#241.....$17.95

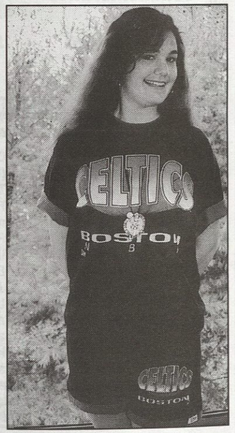
Olympic Gold
Dream Team Gold winning t-shirt in grey. 100% cotton shirt with all the caricatures on the front and the American flag on the back with all their names in blue and red.
#173.....$15.95



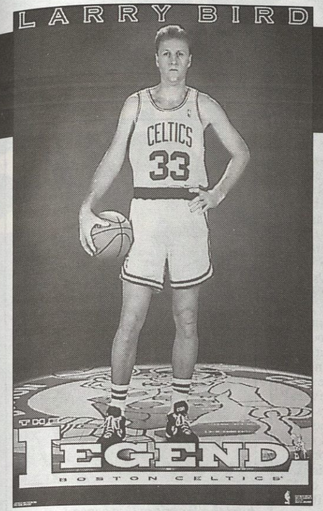
Watch
Made by Bulova. This watch is designed with your more dressier occasions in mind.It features a black leather band, quartz accuracy, gold tone case and face with Celtics logo in green and white in the center of the face.
#233.....$79.95



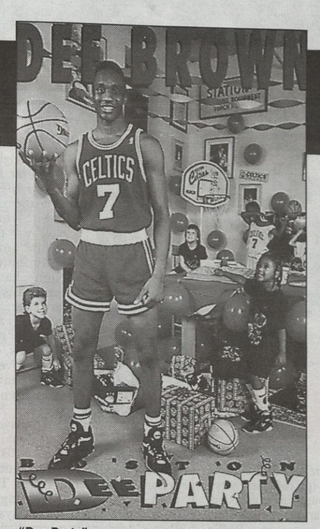
Pen and Paper Set
Write all your favorite Celtics fans on this note-paper with pen included.
#053.....$4.95



Prism Roll'em Up T-Shirt and Shorts
The rugged "double" black t-shirt and shorts are made of 100% cotton. This great design is perfectly matched with the shorts. All are contrasted with Celtic green.
#237 Shirt.....$17.95
#238 Shorts.....$22.95



"The Legend"
It says it all in this 23"x35" colorful poster.
#68.....$9.95



"Dee Party"
This colorful 23"x35" poster showcases Dee unique in personality with this Boston theme.
#69.....$9.95

Celtics Logo Pin
Celtics pin. Get this because everyone is collecting them.
#74.....$4.95

Celtics Earrings
For all the Celtics women fans. Fun wire earrings with the logo in green and white.
#72.....$6.95

CELTICS

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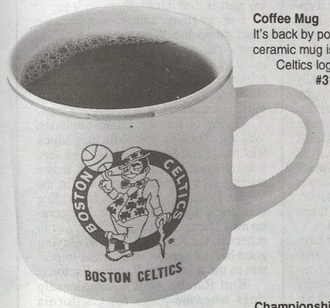
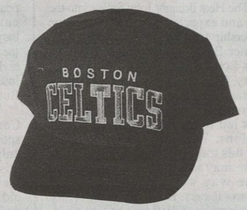
Bird's Retirement
Celebrate Larry's retirement with this great 100% cotton black T-shirt in the Boston Garden on February 4, 1993. This shirt is destined to be a collector's item.
#288.....$17.95

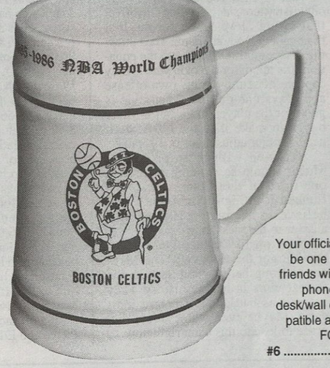


Coffee Mug
It's back by popular demand. This white ceramic mug is trimmed in gold with the Celtics logo located in the center
#31.....$11.95



Pro-Cap
Wool cap in black with Celtics blocked in green embroidered letters. Adjustable back to fit all sizes.
#013.....$16.95

Reggie Lewis Pro Stat
100% cotton ash grey t-shirt screened in black, green and yellow for the bold look of today.
#051.....$14.95



Championship Tankards
Collector's items! Play-off games listed on the back of each tankards. Specify year on order. 73-74, 75-76, 80-81, 83-84, and 85-86.
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Travel Bag
Super-tough green canvas bag by Starter. For all your overnight trips or just a trip to the gym. 21" x 10" x 13"
#17.....$49.95

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#6.....$59.95

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$150.01 - $200	$9.00
OVER 200.01	$10.00

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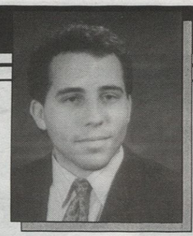


THE FINAL SHOT

PROGNOSTICATING CAN BE A TRICKY BUSINESS

By David Volin

If you had told me in September that the Golden State Warriors would stumble towards the All-Star break with a sub-.500 record, I would have pondered your NBA knowledge.

If you had also told me that only one team in the Eastern Conference would have a worse record than the Miami Heat (at the same juncture), I would simply assume you possessed a very special brand of naivete.

But if you approached me *now* and told me both scenarios, I would say "Great. You can read the standings really well."

Yes, prognosticating is a very tricky business. A team that looks good on paper can sometimes have a lot of problems when it comes to producing between the lines. On the other hand, there are teams that everyone will write off, yet they will unexpectedly overachieve. Still, there can be consistency. Everyone and their third cousin expected New York and Chicago to lead the way in the East. Ditto Utah and Phoenix in the West. But as this 1992-93 campaign evolves, it continues to provide plenty of surprises. Surprises can be either pleasant or pathetic in nature. So has been the case this year. Golden State. San Antonio. Dallas (no one thought they'd be this horrible). Miami. Sacramento.

I've always been a big Don Nelson fan. In a column earlier in the season I tried to initiate a grass roots campaign to get him elected president. Why? Because I've always admired how Nelson is able to get so much from so "little." I was excited about his prospects for this season. With a rapidly improving Billy Owens and the slashing Sarunas Marciulionis I expected these guys to battle for the Pacific Division crown.

Who would expect Marciulionis to break a leg while jogging — or Owens to be lost to a knee injury for the bulk of the season? The Warriors have struggled mightily without those key performers. Chris Mullin is finally beginning to exhibit signs of tiring. It isn't easy to carry the bulk of the scoring load. Tim Hardaway has also leveled off this year. While being great players, Mullin and Hardaway have not been able to pick up the slack. Rebounding, never a Warrior strength, has been even worse this season. And the only team in the league giving up more points per game is Dallas.

The loss of Owens can't be understated. He can play great defense and is the best rebounder on the squad. Keeping that in mind, it's little wonder that the Warriors are looking up at every team in the division except the Kings. Marciulionis is back, but can the team turn it around?

Now let's check another big downer — the Heat. During the pre-season they were expected to move up to the next level (playoff contender). I must confess, I bought into the notion. Glen Rice was a star on the rise. Rony Seikaly was ever-improving. Willie Burton and Grant Long were solid. And Harold Miner was the second coming of His Airness. But, ah, that chemistry. That is a course that Miami has flunked this season.

The Heat brought John Salley into the mix and expected him to supply some leadership for a young team. Instead, the former Bad Boy lived up to his roots after Long was activated following an injury. Both play the same position, but instead of helping Long, Salley began to complain about reduced minutes. This led to the team being split into factions. When a young team falls into this trap, look out. In ten years or so we may look back on this team the same way we currently view the Indiana Pacers. In other words, plenty of talent, but little cohesiveness. Salley vs. Long will be the precedent.

Just in case you don't believe in chemistry, consider the tangible effect that losing Steve Smith for the first three months had on Miami. Then throw the disappointing Miner into the equation. It's tough for a rookie who is only capable of setting up his own offense and plays one-on-one. That style is great for the playgrounds, but if Miner hopes to make it in the NBA, he'll need a major adjustment in his game.

Yet even with these problems, Miami should be winning more than one-third of their games. I almost flunked it in high school, but I still believe in chemistry. It's the best answer to the mess in Miami.

Now on to Dallas. Thank God they've got the Cowboys. The Mavs are a strong bet to wind up with the fewest wins in league history. They are just as bad as their record indicates. Maybe even worse. It's a disgrace to lose to this team right now.

Bright spots? Yeah, right. When Walter Bond is starting along with Randy White you know you're a disaster. White and Doug (20 minute limit) Smith have been such busts it's hard to fathom. If either of those two had a chance of being decent pros, couldn't they prove it on a team that needs help from everywhere? Several NBA players have come out and said that a CBA team would provide more competition this season. Who would argue? This is a team that loses by an average of 17 points per game. That says it all. Richie Adubato is a very lucky man. A very, very, very lucky man.

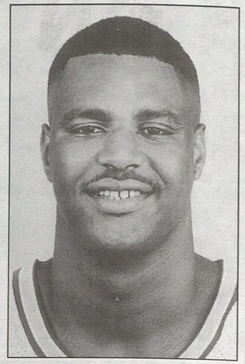
So far this has been pretty depressing. Let's change gears now and check up on some surprises of the pleasant kind.

It's taken a very long time, but it appears that the Seattle Supersonics have moved to the next level. For years, they've been one of those teams that had the talent to beat anyone on a given night. However, they could just as easily lose to anyone on another given night. But not this season — at least thus far.

There isn't a team in the Eastern Conference (including Da Bulls) that sports a better record than Seattle. And only Phoenix has a better home mark this season. The two biggest reasons for the Sonics' emergence are hardly old flowers. It's just that they've taken their time getting ready to bloom.

Shawn Kemp and Gary Payton have emerged as All-Star candidates this season. Kemp has become much more consistent. He's averaged almost 20 points per game (18.5) and is pulling down a lion's share of the Seattle rebounds (10.9 per outing). Payton was the *Sports Illustrated* National Player of the Year back in 1990. It appeared he would make a smooth transition from Oregon State to Seattle, but that was far from the case. Instead, Payton became a textbook case of a player who needed time to adjust to being a professional. And adjust he has (finally). Payton has become the floor general for the Sonics. He's played solid defense and has doubled (16.0) his career scoring average. When Payton came into the league he compared himself favorably to Magic Johnson. It has taken a long time for him to live it down. Now, perhaps, he may try to live up to that statement.

If you factor sharpshooters Ricky Pierce and Eddie Johnson — as well as the steady Derrick McKey — into the mix, it isn't really surprising that this has become a great team. The surprising part is that it took them so long.



The loss of Billy Owens has really hurt the Warriors this season.

For our final "happy" surprise, we head down the West Coast to Sacramento, California. The Kings have played more like court jesters during the bulk of their history, but times appear to be changing. For the first time in memory, there is a nucleus — a strong nucleus.

Try this on for size: Lionel Simmons, Wayman Tisdale, Walt Williams, Mitch Richmond and Spud Webb — five very good players. In fact, as a unit, it is a starting five that can match any in the league. Coach Gary St. Jean is building something very impressive in Sacramento. Though their record has yet to reflect it, the Kings have been playing good ball all season long. Most important to the mix is the Rambis Factor.

Kurt Rambis wins Championship rings when he plays for California teams. Case in point — the Lakers; four rings in seven seasons for the horn-rimmed ruffian. That took him through 1988. In the seasons since, Rambis has played in Charlotte (North Carolina) and in Phoenix (Arizona). In that time he has won zero Championships. Now that Rambis is back in California, it's just a matter of time (if he isn't released) before he sizes up his fifth ring. This makes just as much sense as picking Golden State to finish sixth in the Pacific. With that in mind, I stand by this pick. Remember — prognosticating is a tricky business. ●

David Volin is an independent writer residing in Massachusetts and covering the Celtics for Celtics Pride.

Don Nelson on Larry Bird:

"There are a lot of numbers up there, but they ought to have two different flags with different numbers — one for the superstars, which Larry should go on, and one for the donkeys like me."

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